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The speech act of complaining: a cross-cultural comparative study of Chinese and American English speakers

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The speech act of complaining: A cross-cultural comparative study of
Chinese and American English speakers

by

De Zhang

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

Major: English
(Teaching English as a Second Language/ Applied Linguistics)
Major Professor: Susan M. Conrad

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
2001

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This is to certify that the Master's thesis of

De Zhang

has met the thesis requirements of Iowa State University

Signatures have been redacted for privacy

To my parents, Leqiao Zhou and Shaolian Zhang
and my husband, Jianzhong Zhang
for their encouragement and support

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This study grew out of a class project I did with one of my classmates, Jenny Hykes, in Dr. Barbara Schwarte's Sociolinguistics class in Spring, 2000. The project was a comparative study on complaints produced by native speakers of Chinese and Americans in Chinese and English respectively. The class project had been so rewarding and interesting that it finally led me into doing my thesis study.

Writing a thesis for the completion of graduate studies leading to a master's degree in English could be a painful struggle for any non-native speaker of English. However, for me, doing the study and writing the thesis turned out to be a tiring but joyful experience. Interlanguage pragmatics, the area I touched in my study, combines two of my favorite areas of study: intercultural communication and second language acquisition. In this study, my Chinese background has been a great source of inspiration and support instead of an obstacle.

Working on such a large undertaking, I have been heavily indebted to many people. First, I want to thank the American and Chinese subjects who participated in the study, and those friends who helped me locate the subjects, most of whom I don't know, for their generous help with my study. Without the subjects' complaints, I could not have done the study and I express my gratitude here.

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ABSTRACT

This Chinese-American cross-cultural comparative study on the speech act of complaining aimed to answer the call for the need of a study in the following areas: American-Chinese interlanguage pragmatics, the development of (advanced) L2 learners' pragmatic competence and one of the least studied speech acts--complaining.

In this study, a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) form was used to elicit complaints in 8 hypothetical situations from 94 subjects--32 Chinese longer-term residents with an average length of 3.2 years' residence in the U.S., 30 Chinese short-term residents who had stayed in the U.S for an average of 0.5 year, and 32 Americans. There were four types of hearers in these 8 situations: a professor, a classmate, a service person and a neighbor. A Chi-squared test was used to analyze the data of the complaints. Furthermore, a self-reported questionnaire was given to all the Chinese subjects to get information on their perception, acquisition and pragmatic development of complaining.

A complaint was broken into 6 semantic components—Opener, Orientation, Justification, Remedy, Act Statement and Closing. Remedy and Act Statement are considered two key components. Investigation was done on the patterns of the complaints, the level of the directness in the complaints, the social and situational variations, and cultural influences. The findings showed significant differences between Chinese and Americans' complaints in terms of the use of semantic components, level of directness, and opting out choices and reasons. It was found that Chinese language and culture had influenced Chinese ESL learners'

complaints. Further, social distance and situational variations influenced both Chinese and Americans' performance of complaining. However, a lot of similarities also were found between Chinese and American subjects, which indicated that both Chinese longer-term residents and shorter-term residents had produced somewhat native-like complaints.

These findings will shed light on course and textbook development, and class instruction in English and Chinese as a foreign/second language. This study also provides implications for further research in interlanguage pragmatics.

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

As a Chinese learner and teacher of English as a Second/Foreign language (ESL/EFL), I have been interested in Chinese EFL/ESL students' development and problems in English learning. When I came to the United States, I was sorry to see that despite their high scores on the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and GRE (Graduate Record Exam), Chinese students demonstrated relatively low abilities in using English in authentic situations either orally or in written form. At Iowa State University where I have been studying, Chinese students consist of more than 60% of the student body in all the ESL writing and communication skills remedial classes. Some Chinese students reported to have difficulty in communicating with native speakers. Their difficulties include how to request, complain, and respond to compliments properly. I have gradually developed a great interest in investigating Chinese students' problems and development in communicative competence, especially pragmatic competence in an ESL setting.

In recent discussions, the notion of communicative competence has covered not only linguistic and grammatical knowledge (knowledge of intonation, phonology, syntax, semantics, etc), but also pragmatic knowledge (the knowledge of the rules of appropriateness and politeness dictating the way that the speaker can use the language effectively in the context). The second language researchers' attention has grown with the recognition of the role of pragmatic knowledge in communicative competence. In the field of second language acquisition, "interlanguage pragmatics seeks to describe and explain (second language) learners' development and use of pragmatic knowledge" (Kasper, 1989: 42).

Speech acts have been a central concept in pragmatic studies. When people perform speech acts, they use words to do something, such as making an apology, a request or refusal. All the speech acts are important in social communication. Speech acts theorists' have indicated a relationship between their theoretical analysis and language users' communicative practice by their attempts to group the speech acts. For example, Searle (1976) claimed that thanking, apologizing, and

complaining represent expressive speech acts. Leech (1983) classified the speech acts functionally: thanking and apologizing are convivial, while complaining, requesting, and correcting are competitive acts. The successful performance of the speech acts in a second language demands not only the speaker's linguistic proficiency, but also the speakers' sociopragmatic perception of speech acts. A good mastery of speech acts is very crucial in communication.

I therefore decide to investigate Chinese ESL speakers' development of speech acts in school settings with the hope of gaining insights into instruction on speech acts and pragmatic competence for Chinese ESL/EFL students.

Significance of this Study

The significance of this study lies in the fact that it fills some gaps in the area of interlanguage pragmatics. It investigates advanced Chinese ESL learners' development of pragmatic competence in a very inadequately studied face-threatening speech act—complaining.

Many speech acts, such as request, apology, refusal, compliment, and gratitude, have been somewhat thoroughly studied by sociolinguists and second language acquisition researchers. Interlanguage pragmatics studies on speech acts have provided rich literature on the second language learners' realization of certain specific speech acts, including the semantic formulas, the politeness strategies, the first language and culture's influences on their performance of the speech acts in the L2, and the social and psychological factors that affect speech and performance. All these studies have shed light on the L2 instruction on pragmatic competence.

However, not all the speech acts have received equal attention from the researchers. An example is the speech act of complaining, which has been one of the least studied speech acts. Complaining can be a very useful skill in communication. When an L2 learner gets offended, s/he may want to show her/his disapproval and anger, and request a remedy or solution to the problem. However, complaining, unlike thanking or complimenting, has fewer ritualized or formulized responses. It is hard for L2 learners to acquire. Further, cross-cultural and situational variability may add difficulty to the realization of complaining for L2 learners. Many

L2 learners may hesitate to carry out the speech act of complaining. The major problem may not necessarily be their insufficient L2 proficiency level; rather, they don't know how to complain appropriately. Complaining is a very face-threatening speech act. It jeopardizes not only the Hearer's face but also the Speaker's. An improper production of complaining could damage friendship as well as produce long-lasting misunderstandings between the Speaker and the Hearer. Further, different cultures have different interpretations and values of face; the realization of the speech act of complaining could be difficult and different for L2 learners from different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, an interlanguage pragmatic study on complaining is as worthwhile and rewarding as the studies on any other speech act.

Up to now, few studies have addressed the issue of L2 adult learners' development of pragmatic competence. Consequently, few insights have been gained on advanced L2 learners' development of pragmatic competence. A study in this area seems to be necessary.

As a Chinese, I have been keen on studies between Chinese and western languages. However, my search in the research literature on pragmatics has been very disappointing. I noticed that there is an obvious dearth of research on Chinese learners of foreign languages. A large body of interlanguage pragmatics studies has been done between Western cultures and languages. There are relatively few studies between Eastern and Western cultures/languages, even fewer between Chinese and western languages. Chinese, a culture with a very long history, and the language spoken by the largest population in the world, has been somehow ignored in the area of interlanguage pragmatics studies. This may have largely resulted from the long time closed-door policy carried out by the Chinese government in the past two centuries. Now Chinese ESL learners have been reported to be the largest population in schools and universities in the U.S. Also Chinese students' relatively poor communicative competence in English calls for more insightful studies and effective instruction on the speech acts realized in English. Further, there are more and more Americans learning Chinese. Therefore, it is worthwhile doing American-Chinese interlanguage pragmatics studies.

In summary, this comparative study on the speech act of complaining aims to answer the call for the need of a study in the following areas: the American--Chinese interlanguage pragmatics, the development of (advanced) L2 learners' pragmatic competence and one of the least studied speech acts---complaining.

A Brief Description of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine how Chinese ESL learners of different lengths of residence in the U.S complain differently from native speakers; what the major differences are between Chinese and American English speakers in complaining with respect to semantic components, level of directness, cultural influences, etc.; and whether Chinese ESL learners have developed their pragmatic competence after a certain length of residence in an ESL setting.

This study is targeted toward advanced Chinese ESL learners who got satisfactory TOEFL scores (with an average score of about 600) and got admitted to a graduate program at a U.S university. To see the development of the Chinese ESL learners' pragmatic competence in an ESL situation, two groups of Chinese students were chosen. One group had been in the U.S. for an average length of 3.2 years. The other had been in the U.S for about half a year. A group of American subjects was chosen as a comparison group to determine the native-likeness of Chinese ESL learners' complaints. To gain insights into the Chinese language and culture's influences on Chinese ESL learners' pragmatic development, the differences between the Chinese and American subjects were carefully investigated.

With more than 90 subjects involved, a large amount of complaining data was solicited in 8 situations by a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) form. The semantic components and some specific linguistic features of the complaints as well as the strategies adopted by the subjects, and Chinese cultural influences were examined. A Chi-square test was run to analyze the data and statistical significant differences were identified.

Further, all of the 62 Chinese subjects answered the questions on a self-report questionnaire. Rich information was gained in terms of Chinese ESL learners'

awareness and acquisition of pragmatic competence in the speech act of complaining.

Research Questions

To fulfill the two-fold purpose of this comparative and developmental study, the following research questions were posed for this study:

1. How do Chinese and Americans' complaints differ with respect to the semantic components that are included?
2. What are the differences in the level of directness between Chinese and Americans' complaints, if any?
3. What are the influences of social distance and the perception of severity of the wrong on the subjects' production of complaints?
4. Do the social factors and situational variations influence the American and Chinese students' performance of the speech act of complaining? If yes, in what ways?
5. What are the Chinese ESL learners' developmental trends and problems in their complaints, if any?

Preview of the Study

To address these research questions, I begin in Chapter Two, with a presentation of background information about the study. This chapter reviews the research literature in the speech act of complaining and other related areas. Some key theories, issues and previous studies on complaining are presented. Chapter Three, Methodology, introduces the methods, instruments, subjects and analysis system of the study. Chapter Four reports the results of the study and discussions about the results. Chapter Five provides summaries of the results of the study as well as limitations of the study, and implications for further research and application in ESL teaching.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

An American-Chinese cross-cultural/interlanguage pragmatics study involves a thorough understanding of many theories and terms plus background knowledge of both American and Chinese cultures. This chapter is divided into 5 major parts to cover all the necessary areas. In Part One, I will begin my literature review with the definitions of some key terms and issues in my study: communicative competence, pragmatics and interlanguage pragmatics, and speech act. Then, I will proceed to clarify the definition of complaining—a face-threatening speech act, and face-threatening related issues. Then a review of the previous studies on the speech act of complaining will be provided in Part Three. Since I am conducting an American-Chinese cross-cultural study in which Chinese ESL learners' pragmatic competence is examined, a brief introduction to some related Chinese cultural background knowledge is necessary. Therefore, in Part Four, I will specifically highlight some Chinese cultural beliefs that may play a significant role in Chinese ESL learners' production of complaints in English. Next, I will introduce Chinese face-work and the politeness strategies Chinese may adopt in complaining. Last, I will briefly review the research literature on second language learners' development of pragmatic competence.

General Terms

In this section, I am going to introduce some very important terms in this study, which provide some necessary theoretical knowledge in the understanding of an interlanguage/ cross-cultural pragmatics study.

Communicative competence was first used by Hymes (1972) to refer to the knowledge of the social and cultural rules of language use as well as the structural rules. As I mentioned in the Introduction, in recent research and studies, pragmatic knowledge has been included in communicative competence.

Pragmatics refers to the ability to use language effectively to achieve a specific purpose in a certain situation. Interlanguage pragmatics studies the non-native speakers' use and acquisition of second language in the target society.

The notion of speech act is central to pragmatic theory. Theories of speech acts proposed by Austin and elaborated on by Searle have been the basis of recent second language research on interlanguage pragmatics.

Austin (1962) defines speech act as all the things we do with words when we speak. Examples of speech acts are making apologies, making requests, expressing gratitude, and making refusals. In other words, when people refuse, complain, apologize, or compliment, they are using utterances to perform a speech act. Searle (1969) claims that the performances of the speech acts, not sentences or other expressions, are the minimal units of human communication.

Since my thesis study is investigating the speech act of complaining, it is very important to present a clear-cut definition of a speech act of complaining and precede my data analysis with a detailed review of its research literature.

Speech Act of Complaining and Closely Related

Terms and issues

Direct, indirect complaints and gripes are usually grouped into one speech event termed as “troubles telling” (Jefferson—Lee, 1981; Jefferson, 1984), “troubles talk” (Tanner, 1990) or “troubles-sharing” (Hatch 1992) (see Boxer, 1996). Some researchers differentiated complaining from griping (Boxer, 1996; DeCapua, 1989; Schaefer, 1982; Giddens, 1981). When people gripe or make an indirect complaint, they only tend to express their frustration, dissatisfaction, etc., to a person who may have no power to remediate the problem. Therefore, the crucial difference between a gripe or an indirect complaint and a (direct) complaint is whether the hearer/addressee holds responsibility for a perceived offence or redemption of the problems (Boxer 1996; DeCapua, 1989).

Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) offered a new and clear definition of complaining.

“In the speech act of complaining, the speaker (S) expresses displeasure or annoyance—censure—as a reaction to a past or ongoing action, the consequences of which are perceived by S as affecting her unfavorably. This complaint is usually addressed to the hearer (H) whom the S holds, at least partially, responsible for the offensive action” (Olshtain and Weinbach, 1993: 108).

This is the definition of the speech act of complaining I used in my study. To be clearer, the complaint I am investigating in the present study is a direct complaint, that is, the speaker addresses the hearer/address who is responsible for the offensive act.

Complaining is generally considered as a face-threatening speech act. Therefore, the notion of “face” deserves mention. Brown and Levinson (1987) propose a highly abstract notion of “face” and argue that it is universal. It consists of two specific kinds of desires (“face-wants”): “the desire to be unimpeded in one’s actions (negative face) and the desire (in some respects) to be approved of (positive face)” (Brown and Levinson, 1987:13). Complaining is one of the face-threatening acts that intrinsically threaten both negative and positive face of the hearer. Here is an example. During a lecture, a student interrupts and complains to his professor openly by saying, “Professor X, your lecture is really boring. I am wasting my time here. Please stop lecturing.” In this case, the professor’s positive face (the individual needs for recognition and appreciation of the self-image) and negative face (the need for freedom of individual action and freedom of imposition) are damaged. The student is certainly considered very rude since he does not take the professor’s face into consideration.

Of course, the above example I devised is an extreme one. It is very unlikely to happen in real life. During communicative interactions, it is normally the case that careful effort is made to lessen face-threatening costs and people usually get credit for being tactful and polite. Relative power (P), social distance (D) and the absolute ranking of imposition (R) are three important, independent and culturally sensitive variables in a study of cross-cultural pragmatics. In Brown and Levinson’s (1987) definitions, relative power (P) refers to the power of the speaker with respect to the hearer, which reflects the degree to which the speaker can impose his or her will on the hearer. Social Distance (D) tells the degree of familiarity and solidarity the speaker and hearer share. Absolute ranking (R) of imposition in the culture refers to the potential expenditure of goods and/or services by the hearer. This reflects the right of the speaker to perform the act and the degree to which the hearer welcomes

the imposition. When performing a face-threatening act, relative power (P), social distance (D) and the absolute ranking of imposition (R) are the common variables people weigh when people choose to adopt either a positive politeness strategy or negative politeness strategy. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), positive politeness strategies attempt to maintain the public self-image or face and show rapport between the speaker and the hearer by using friendly, familiar language. Negative politeness strategies aim to minimize those costs that threaten listeners' desire to maintain freedom of action and personal space by using formal, more conventionalized and less direct language.

To make the above information clearer, I will cite examples from Brown and Levinson (1987). For example, Strategy 7, "Presuppose/raise/assert common ground", is one of the 15 positive politeness strategies they gave. Before a speaker (S) addresses a face-threatening act (FTA), S may gossip or do small talk about some unrelated topics with the hearer (H). S may stress the common ground he shares with H---common concerns, and common attitudes towards interesting events. Typical expressions are "Isn't it a beautiful day?" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 123) "Look, you know I've got this test coming up, well how about lending me your *Encyclopaedia Britannica*?" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 124).

After the explanation and analysis of all these related terms and issues for an interlanguage pragmatics study of the speech act of complaining, I am going to move to the studies previously conducted on complaints.

Previous Studies on the Speech Act of Complaining

Studies on the speech act of complaining are very limited, but they still deserve my careful review.

House and Kasper (1981) studied the speech acts of complaints and requests in terms of politeness. Pairs of German and English native speakers acted out twenty-four role-play situations orally. The situations were taped, transcribed and then analyzed. House and Kasper came up with eight different levels of directness in complaints. The results of the House and Kasper study indicate that native speakers of German tend to use more direct language in expressing their complaints than do

native speakers of British English. Furthermore, the data in the study suggest that Germans use more modality markers, which either intensify or soften the intended pragmatic force of an utterance, particularly when they wish to intensify the pragmatic force of an utterance. For example, the modality marker such as “immediately” serves to intensify a request (“Please come here immediately”).

In 1981 and 1982, Inoue, Giddens and Schaefer did parallel studies on the oral complaints produced by native-speakers of Japanese, Spanish and English, investigating the syntactic and discourse components in the oral complaints and the influence of the speaker’s/complainer’s sex on these components. They used “role play interview” to elicit oral complaints from native speakers of the above three languages at three universities in Japan, Mexico and America. Twenty hypothetical situations calling for a complaint that occur in a wide range of social settings were devised and recorded on the tapes. The subjects’ responses of complaining were also tape-recorded. The result was a set of seven semantic formulas. These seven formulas were used to analyze the data in this study. They are Opener, Orientation, Act Statement, Justification (a. Justification of the Speaker, b. Justification of the Hearer), Remedy (a. Threat), Valuation and Closing.

In addition, in his (1982) study on English speakers’ oral complaints, Schaefer found that sociolinguistic variables such as age, status and social distance (intimacy) and severity of the perceived wrong tended to influence the frequency of the use of the semantic categories.

In Olshtain and Weinbach (1993), three studies on cross-cultural complaints were reported: (1) a study of complaint performance by native speakers of Hebrew, (2) a cross-cultural comparison of complaining by native speakers of Hebrew and British and American English, and (3) an interlanguage study, comparing complaint realization by nonnative speakers of Hebrew at intermediate and advanced proficiency levels with that of native speakers.

In the first study, five major categories were developed to describe the severity of the complaint. They are (a) below the level of the reproach, (b) expression of annoyance, (c) explicit complaint, (d) accusation and warning, and (e)

immediate threat. Among these five categories, native speakers of Hebrew were found to tend to cluster around the three central strategies: disapproval, complaint, and warning.

Study 2 aimed to compare different cultural groups with respect to a set of situations in terms of their preference for the opting strategies, the direct strategy (explicit disapproval), the unmitigated (warning), and the mitigated strategy (conventional complaint). The instrument used, titled Reaction Elicitation Questionnaire, was a modified version of Blum-Kulka's (1982) Discourse Completion Questionnaire. Twenty situations were divided into 5 main content categories: littering, noise making, unpunctuality, queue jumping and petty stealing, which were all socially unacceptable behavior in a Western culture. Although given the choice to opt out, two-thirds of the respondents in each group did choose to complain. As to the strategy preferences among those who decided to carry out the speech act of complaining, the differences were negligible. Probably the "seemingly" universal situations selected for the instrument contributed to similar strategy choice in these three cultural groups. Further, the distribution of responses of three cultural groups differ in their complaints only slightly with respect to three situations (noise, unpunctuality, line), while showing almost identical realization patterns for the other two. Therefore, the results of this study clearly showed a similarity of performance on the speech act realization among the three cultural groups.

The third study focused on a large-scale comparison on native and non-native realizations of complaints with respect to 5 measures: utterance length as expressed in number of words, utterance length as expressed in number of moves, position on the severity scale, use of softeners, and use of intensifiers. In addition, two shorter studies were conducted among the nonnative group, which dealt with cultural and ethnic preferences for strategy selection, with an attempt to seek understanding of the various factors that might affect interlanguage behavior. The results indicated stronger differences in the first three measures---total length of utterance, number of moves, and the severity scale (strategy selection)---although differences existed in the complaints produced by both groups in all the selected measures. This result

reinforces the findings presented in Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986) and strengthened the researchers' belief that advanced learners tend to use more words to negotiate their intentions expressed via speech act realizations.

Further, the learners of Hebrew produced longer complaint utterances, chose more severe complaining strategies, and used both more softeners and intensifiers. The variables of interlocutors' relative status, social distance and hearer's obligation had influences on the strategy choice. In both groups, the hearer obligation played an important role in the amount of talk. Both groups produced the most talk when no explicit hearer obligation existed. Increasing obligation resulted in more severe strategies in both groups. However, the learners produced longer utterances when the hearer's obligation was implicit, and they opted for more severe strategies than the native speakers did when an explicit obligation had been violated. Just as in Eisenstein and Bodman's (1986) findings, the learner responses in this study, too, displayed more variability, suggesting that these nonnative speakers were not quite accustomed to target conventions of means and forms.

Murphy and Neu had a two-fold purpose in their American-Korean cross-cultural study (1996), which examined the speech act of complaining from both the speakers' and the listeners' perspectives. Their first purpose is to determine how native speakers of English and Korean learners of English complain; the second is to examine native speakers' judgement on the speech act set of complaints. They used an oral Discourse Completion Task to collect data in one hypothesized situation: the subjects had to complain about a low grade to a professor. The responses were tape-recorded. The data indicated that the speech act set of complaint consists of four basic components: explanation of purpose, complaint, justification and candidate solution--request. However, Murphy and Neu found that 11 out of 14 (79%) of the Korean learners of English produced criticism instead of complaints. Later, 27 native speakers of American English listened to a sample of the complaint and of a criticism produced by the non-native speakers and did an acceptability judgement on the responses. The "criticizer" was judged to be aggressive, disrespectful, and lacking credibility, while the "complainer" was the

opposite, i.e. not aggressive, respectful and credible. Koreans' criticizing the professor for a bad grade may demonstrate Korean's different academic hierarchy from that of American's.

None of the studies looked at the nonnative speakers' pragmatic development in the performance of the speech act of complaining. My study aims to present not only the differences between Chinese ESL learners' complaints and American native speakers', but also Chinese ESL learners' development, if any, shown in the complaints produced by the Chinese ESL learners of varied lengths of residence in the U.S.

Complaining and Chinese Culture

In this section, I am going to talk about any Chinese culture knowledge related to my study on American-Chinese complaining. This section includes topics on potential Chinese cultural influences on Chinese ESL learners' production of complaints in English, how Chinese complain in their native language, Chinese face value and Chinese indirectness. All these issues are important background knowledge in this study.

Chinese culture influences on Chinese students' acquisition of the speech act of complaining in English

It is generally believed that the native culture has significant influences on L2 learners' pragmatic development. In my study on Chinese ESL learners' performance and development in the speech act of complaining, I should not overlook Chinese culture and its potential influences on Chinese ESL learners' production of complaints.

There are several very famous Chinese sayings that may warn the Chinese away from complaining, such as "be strict with yourself while always be generous and tolerant to others" (yan yu lu ji, kuan yi dai ren), "when you are on the right side, forgive those who have done wrong" (de li rao ren), "harmony is precious" (he wei gui), "losing money or property prevents some coming trouble or disaster" (po cai xiao zai). Further, the Chinese character "ren", which means "tolerate" or "put up with", is hung in many Chinese people's offices or homes. The Chinese character

“ren” is made up of two Chinese characters with the one meaning “heart” under the other which means “knife”. Chinese usually interpret this character as “even if someone puts a knife on your heart, you have to endure or tolerate it.”

When we look at Chinese ESL learners’ performance of complaining in school settings, the traditional relationship between Chinese teachers and students is a very important issue. Confucianism has played a dominant role in Chinese culture and society for more than 2000 years. According to Confucius, who was a great Chinese educator, philosopher and saint living about 2000 years ago, teachers should play an authoritative role in the class and school. Just as a foreigner observed, “Teaching is an exalted profession in Chinese culture,...students respond to teachers as to a stern parent--with attention, silence, and fear. They do not question teachers, or challenge their judgements, provided the teacher behaves with more integrity” (Bond, 1991: 29).

In addition to all these typical Chinese cultural beliefs, however, in Chinese culture, we have a saying equivalent to the English one “when you are in Rome, do as the Romans do.” Chinese ESL learners could complain in a way that Americans do in spite of the Chinese cultural influences if they notice any difference between Chinese and American complaint production.

All these differences and similarities in American and Chinese cultures have been my motivation for this study.

Chinese “face” value and complaining in Chinese

In a study looking at a face-threatening act conducted by Chinese, Chinese face value deserves considerable attention, especially when it has prompted some recent debates concerning the differences between the Chinese facework and Brown and Levinson (1987)'s face concept.

Things usually seem more complicated just when we know more about them. In Chinese, there are two words for the English equivalent “face”. “The Chinese ‘face’ has two aspects: one, *mianzi*, refers to “the need of an individual to conform to social conventions and express one's desire to be part of this community”; the other, *lian*, defines a need to show one's moral sense of place and role” (Hu, 1944: 65).

According to xiandai hanyu cidian (1993), the most authoritative Chinese dictionary currently in use, *mianzi* and *lian* share the meanings of “face” and “sensibilities” except that *mianzi* may also mean “prestige” or “respectability”.

Chinese culture values collectivism over individualism, which therefore may account for Chinese people's major concern of group or community harmony. However, western/American culture tends to cherish individualism over collectivism. These differences may influence people's adoption of different politeness strategies.

Following are three Chinese scholars' arguments concerning politeness and face. A brief review of them may be helpful for us to understand Chinese and American's performance of complaining.

Mao (1994) debated with Brown and Levinson (1987) about their politeness theories based on the notion of “face” and made two major arguments against their theories. In short, his main point is that Brown and Levinson's negative face plays little or no role in Chinese culture because of Chinese culture's negative attitude towards personal freedom of action.

Ji (2000) argues that both of Mao's (1994) arguments are not convincing. Ji thinks that

“B & L's recognition of face as a self-image is valid in the sense that the perception of face by everyone in a community as a self-image provides the essential motivation for them to care about it in the first place (whether they are in a Western or Chinese culture). It is this awareness of the importance of face as everybody's self-image that motivates people to adopt positive or negative politeness strategies in social interaction” (Ji, 2000: 1060).

Next, Ji argues that “Chinese culture may be more positive-politeness orientated, but this is because certain polite verbal behaviors in this culture are indeed attributable to maintaining positive face. This conclusion cannot and should not be established on the sheer meaning of *mianzi* or *lian*, because they simply do not have the connotations Mao claims them to have” (Ji, 2000: 1060-1061). Ji further claims that “B & L's dichotomy of positive and negative faces is justifiable” (Ji, 2000: 1060) in different cultures and we need “better explanations for the various kinds of polite verbal behaviors exhibited in difference cultures” (Ji, 2000:1062).

According to Zhang (1995), the social orientation and public character of Chinese face contrasts with Brown and Levinson's face conception, which evolves around an individual's private face "wants". Furthermore, the interactional dynamics of facework in Chinese is positively reciprocal with both parties engaged in mutually shared orientation to negotiate, elevate, and attend to each other's face as well as one's own face. The facework proposed in Brown and Levinson, on the other hand, is unidirectional with the Speaker taking redressive measures to address the Hearer's face. The three predictive variables, P (Relative Power), D (Social Distance), R (Ranking of Imposition), are indices by which the Speaker assesses situations for linguistic strategies to take care of the face wants of the Hearer. Finally, face-balance is central in Chinese facework--giving face simultaneously enhance one's own face; by the same token, depriving other's face damages one's own face." (Zhang, 1995: 85) "To be polite in Chinese discourse," Mao observes, "is to know how to attend to each other's *lian* and *mianzi* and to perform speech acts appropriate to and worthy of such an image" (Mao, 1994: 19)

Du (1995) examines the realization in Chinese of three face-threatening acts: complaining, giving bad news, and disagreeing. A 19-item production questionnaire was used to elicit data. The complaining situation in the questionnaire for the study involves a neighbor whose daughter takes violin lessons in the evenings and thereby makes a noise that prevents the speaker from concentrating on his/her work. The result of the distribution of complaining strategies indicates that direct complaining is avoided. Rather, strategies proposing, in a constructive manner, how the course of irritation can be removed ("Suggest", e.g. "Daytime practice would yield best results" and "Hope", e.g. "I hope that maybe she could practice after dinner.") and strategies avoiding mention of the problem altogether by adjusting to the situation ("Try to cope") are favored ways of dealing with the disturbing event. These strategies attend to participants' face concerns and help maintain surface harmony, a crucial social factor governing Chinese daily life. Therefore, Du concluded that, in Chinese culture, due to the complicated face-work, Chinese people generally tend to avoid face-to-face complaints unless absolutely necessary.

Level of Directness and Chinese Indirectness

The concept of directness is closely related to the notion of face-threatening speech acts and politeness strategies. Directness is “the degree of how face-threatening an utterance is, that is, how strong, forceful, abrupt, or aggressive the tone of an utterance or a speech act is” (DeCapua, 1989: 26). For example, the utterance “you made a mess in my room” is more face threatening than the one “I have to clean the mess in my room now”. In the former, the speaker directly challenges the hearer’s public self-image while in the latter, the hearer is not made the direct object of the accusation. Further, directness of an utterance in the speech acts may vary from culture to culture. “How direct speakers can be in expressing any speech act is culturally determined and situationally dependent”. (Blum-Kulka, 1982; Chaika, 1989; Schmidt and Richards, 1980; as in DeCapua, 1989: 27).

Chinese are generally considered more indirect than westerners in their utterances. In pursuing the answers to the question how indirectness expresses itself in Chinese and how the Chinese perceive it, Zhang (1995) revealed that Chinese indirectness is realized at the discourse level, either by “small talk” (i.e. conversation on topics not related to the intended action), or “supportive moves” (i.e. conversation used to mitigate or aggravate the speakers’ intended action, it does not contain the intended proposition). Further, Zhang (1995) states that Chinese indirectness is seemingly associated with information sequencing. First, the indirectness is determined by whether the speaker prefaces his/her intended proposition with any small talk or supportive moves. Next, the degree of indirectness is determined by the length of the supportive moves. Chinese usually think that the more supportive moves the speaker carries out, the more indirect the speech becomes.

Zhang (1995) summarizes that Chinese tend to achieve indirectness mainly through utterance external linguistic build-ups, (i.e., small talk or supportive moves), rather than utterance internal devices (e.g., modals, particles, pronouns, etc.).

Acquisition and Development of Pragmatic Competence

In a study in which one of the aims is to shed light on the development of pragmatic competence in ESL/EFL situation, I cannot afford to neglect Chinese ESL learners' awareness of pragmatics, and further, their acquisition and development of pragmatic competence in an ESL situation.

A lot of factors may contribute to the acquisition and development of L2 learners' pragmatic competence. Two of them are the influences of L2 learners' native culture and their length of residence in or exposure to the target culture.

Few studies have addressed native cultural influences on the L2 learners' acquisition of speech acts in the target language. Omar's 1991 study, "How Learners greet in Kiswahili: A cross sectional survey", is an interesting study of the interaction of cultural and linguistic factors in the development of pragmatic competence in L2 learners. She suggests that even though the language learners know how to perform a particular speech act in the new language, they are still unable to act accordingly in the new language because of the values and/or customs associated with their native language (Bouton, 1991).

L2 learners from an Eastern culture may have more difficulty in acquiring the successful performance of speech acts in an Anglo-European language due to the bigger differences between Eastern and Western cultures, and vice versa.

Second language learners' length of residence in the target community or exposure to the target culture plays an important role in their target language learning and especially the development of pragmatic competence. It is understandable that the ESL learners who have lived in the United States a short time usually still practice under the influence of their native social values and culture since they have relatively little exposure to the target language and culture.

Some studies on speech acts have shown that the length of the L2 learners' residence in the target community is important in L2 learners' pragmatic competence development. Olshtain and Blum-Kulka (1983) found that after more than 10 years' residency in Israel, the learners' L2 Hebrew demonstrated the same high level of tolerance for direct and positive politeness strategies as native speakers of Hebrew.

In studies by Walters (1979) and Carrell and Konnerker (1981), the advanced learners were found to have perceived the politeness level of different requests in accordance with native-speaker norms (see Ellis, 1997).

However, researchers also have noticed evidence of some differences. For example, advanced learners appear to be more sensitive to the use of politeness strategies in requesting than is evident in native speakers. Ellis drew a tentative conclusion that “with sufficient exposure to the L2, learners are able to perceive the sociolinguistic distinctions encoded by native speakers in requests, but that they may become oversensitive to them” (Ellis, 1997: 171). Therefore, we have questions to address in the future research: how many years of exposure to the target language and culture are sufficient to perceive native speakers’ sociolinguistic distinctions and to perform the speech acts in fully native-like ways? For ESL learners who are full-time students pursuing various degrees (bachelors, master’s and doctoral degrees) in the U.S, the average length of residence on campus may be 3 to 3.5 years. In my study, I will look into the advanced Chinese ESL learners’ complaints after their average 3.2-year length of residence in the U.S.

All the factors in the acquisition and development of language learning and pragmatic competence lead to a haunting question for second language educators and researchers: how can second/foreign language learners acquire native-like pragmatic competence and perform the speech acts like native speakers?

For the second language learner, to perform a successful speech act, the more challenging part is not necessarily the linguistic features or formulae in the production of the speech acts, but rather the cultural influences and social issues. Linguistic features or formulae may be taught and learned in classroom instruction. A solid mastery of the cultural and social rules of the target community is harder to gain. As noticed by many researchers, the biggest and the most basic difference between foreign language and second language instruction may lie in that the latter is situated in the target culture and community, while in foreign language instruction, the learners live in their own native language and culture environment. Therefore, second language learners have a greater possibility than foreign language learners

to acquire the necessary sociocultural knowledge and proper semantic formulae to perform the speech acts in the target language. Consequently, second language learners may achieve more noticeable and efficient development of pragmatic competence than foreign language learners do.

Tateyamn et al (1997) pointed out that a number of studies have shown that second language acquisition contexts provide richer opportunities for developing pragmatic abilities in L2 than foreign language teaching environment. For example, Takahashi and Beebe (1987) found that learners in an ESL context produce more target-like refusals.

In my study, I investigate Chinese ESL learners' acquisition in the U.S. --an ESL situation. The issues I address are Chinese ESL learners' production of complaints, awareness of pragmatic competence, and consequently their self-adopted approaches to acquire and develop pragmatic competence in the particular speech act of complaining.

The Pilot Study

The findings, limitations and problems of a class project I did in Sociolinguistics class in spring, 2000 led me to this thesis study. The class project served as my pilot study for this study. In the pilot study, I used a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) form, which contained 6 academic and non-academic student life situations, to elicit data of complaints. There were 30 (15 female and 15 male) Chinese students and 30 (15 male and 15 female) American students participating. Chinese students' lengths of residence in the U.S. and the American students' origin areas were not considered. Major findings included:

- (1) In general, Chinese complained less than Americans did in all 6 situations with the hearers being a professor, classmate, a roommate, and a cashier.
- (2) Chinese cultural influences were found on the Chinese ESL learners' production of complaints. For example, when overcharged, Chinese complained less to the cashier than Americans did, believing that "losing money could prevent me from a coming trouble or disaster". Chinese students held the belief that students should not challenge the professor, which was the

result of the influence of Confucianism—teacher is a definite authority in the school.

(3) When requesting a solution to the offensive problem, Chinese students used the pronoun “you” more than Americans did. For example, in the situation of the slow service in a restaurant, “Could you serve me soon?” “Could you please be quicker?” However, Americans used “I” more than Chinese did. Typical expressions were “I was wondering if we could be served here?” “Could I get the food I ordered sooner?”

There were limitations and problems of my pilot study. The first biggest problem was the Chinese data were given in Chinese. When I translated the data from Chinese into English, I might have somewhat changed the original meanings or direct/indirect levels due to the differences of the two languages. The second problem was that in the directions, Chinese and American subjects were asked both in English and Chinese “what would you do and say in the situation?” Many subjects might prefer to tell what they would do instead of what they would complain in words. This might have affected the subjects’ production of complaints.

In this study, great efforts were made to eliminate or minimize the problems and limitations that occurred in the pilot study.

Summary

In this chapter, I have reviewed the necessary theoretical terms and issues in the area of interlanguage/cross-cultural pragmatics, particularly those closely related to this American-Chinese interlanguage/cross-cultural study on complaining. Knowledge of Chinese culture, Chinese face value and indirectness was provided. Previous studies on the speech act of complaining and their major findings were introduced. The gap of the studies on complaining has been revealed, which is the focus of this study---an American-Chinese comparative and developmental study on complaining, a speech act that has been studied very inadequately.

CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

This chapter introduces the methods used in the study, including the data-collection instruments, the subjects, and the data analysis system. The data analysis consists of 8 parts: (1) the subjects' use of 6 semantic components across the situations; (2) major patterns of the complaints revolving around two key semantic components; (3) softeners in the Act Statement; (4) direct strategies and conventional indirect strategies in Remedy; (5) subjects' opting out choices and reasons for opting out; (6) request perspectives in Remedy utterances; (7) Chinese ESL learners' answers on the questionnaire; (8) development and problems of Chinese ESL learners' pragmatic competence.

Instruments--The Discourse Completion Task (DCT) and Self-Report Questionnaire

The procedure by which to collect data had been a major concern from the very beginning of this study. It is widely known that collecting natural data from real life situations is the best manner for any sociolinguistic research. This study is no exception. However, since the time I had for my thesis study was limited, it was very unrealistic for me to collect enough naturally occurring data of complaints. The nature of comparability of this study and the demands for large amounts of data forced me to seek other research method alternatives. In this study, I would examine not only cross-culturally the speech act of complaining within the same language--English, but also the acquisition and development of Chinese ESL learners' pragmatic competence. Also the data would be collected from three groups of subjects: a group of American subjects and two groups of Chinese subjects who had been in the U.S for different lengths of time. Females and males were included in all three groups. The data were solicited from the subjects in the same language in the same situations, which would make it convenient for me to compare the subjects' complaints and the reasons for their choices to opt out if they would choose not to complain. Further, I wanted to study Chinese students' awareness and acquisition of the pragmatic competence in the specific speech act of complaining. So I decided to

choose two instruments to collect data to answer my research questions: one to elicit the subjects' complaints which would be the major part of my data, a Discourse Completion Task form, and the other to get the information about the students' awareness and acquisition of pragmatic development, a questionnaire.

My data-collection instruments, the DCT form and the questionnaire, are provided in Appendix C and D.

Discourse Completion Task form

The major instrument I used to elicit the complaints was a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) form, which had been one of my top choices from the very beginning due to its high popularity in the studies of interlanguage pragmatics. However, as any other research method, it has its advantages and disadvantages. There has been a lot of debate about the validity of this method. The major disadvantages of this methods are that DCT form can not adequately present the actual wording used in real interaction, the range of formulas and strategies used, and the length of response or the number of turns it takes to fulfil the function. However, DCT form has been proved to a highly effective means of gathering a large amount of data quickly, creating an initial classification of semantic formula and strategies that will occur in natural speech, studying the stereotypical, perceived requirements for a socially appropriate response, and gaining insight into social and psychological factors that are likely affect speech and performance (Beebe and Cummings, 1985, see Kasper and Dahl, 1991). Furthermore, the DCT has an advantage over natural conversation because it is replicable and allows for the comparative study of non-native speakers and L1 and L2 native speakers (Kasper and Dahl, 1991).

Compared the cons and prons of DCT form, I thought a DCT form was the most suitable instrument to elicit data of complaints for my study. Firstly, it can gather a large amount of data quickly, which is very important for this study. Secondly, it is useful for gaining an initial classification of semantic features and strategies that will occur in natural speech. Thirdly, it is easy to manipulate variables

to determine what social factors affect speech and performance. The above advantages of DCT make it an ideal instrument for the study.

Situations on the DCT form

As we know, pragmatic competence is necessary in the social life of ESL students. In my study, one of my major interests was the interplay of the American and Chinese cultures and its influences on Chinese ESL learners' pragmatic competence in the particular speech act of complaining. Therefore, I decided to choose situations occurring relatively frequently in the U.S.A and for which the Chinese cultural beliefs may have some influence on Chinese ESL learners' production of the complaints. In order to get the most reliable and authentic data from my student subjects, I devised 8 hypothetical situations that most probably occur in their daily life as college students in the United States.

I purposely designed 8 situations to approximate authentic situations. In some real life situations, people may produce very immediate complaining responses. A case in point is someone stepping on your foot on a bus, and you are hurt very badly. Another example is in a movie theatre, your neighbors' loud talking is so annoying that you are losing the story line. In these situations, you may respond with a very quick complaint to stop them and rectify the wrong. However, in my study, the subjects wrote their responses. Even though I asked them to respond spontaneously, the subjects would have time to think about their responses. Therefore, I designed 8 situations that in real life also give time for thought. That is, I designed situations in which both in real life and in my study, people would have time to think about whether they should carry out the speech act, and how to conduct the speech act if they choose not to opt out. Therefore, I hoped that what the subjects would actually say or do in the real life situations would be very close to their responses on my DCT form, although further study is necessary to confirm this.

The task is made up of a short but complete description of the situation, specifying the complaining inducing setting; then a response is requested. A sample setting and some sample answers were given on the DCT form, which served as a part of the direction for the subjects. Following is the sample setting and the two

possible sample responses in the situation. I borrowed the sample setting and the sample responses from Gidden's (1981) study.

Sample Situation:

You have been waiting for over an hour in a long line to purchase tickets for the first showing of a new movie. You are rather worried that the tickets may soon be sold out. As you turn around to estimate the length of the line, a teenager cuts in front of you.

You response is:

Some possible responses:

"Well, what are you doing cuttin'in front of the line here? I have been waiting here all this time. You should have to wait as well. Why don't you just go to the back of the line?"

"I've been waiting on this line for a long time, and—I really don't think it's fair that you cut in front of me. I want a ticket just as much as you do so please be fair and go away, to the end of the line. Like I had to do when I got here an hour and a half ago."

"Would you please go to the back of the line? I've been standing here for quite awhile myself, and—everyone— has to take their turn. Thank you."

Table 3.1 contains the 8 situations and their descriptions on my DCT form. In the 8 situations, there were four types of hearers: a professor, a classmate, a neighbor and a service person. And there were two situations for each type of hearers.

Table 3. 1 Situations and their descriptions on the DCT form

Situations	Descriptions
1	Professor Smith teaches you one of the required major courses. You have worked very hard on this course. When he posted the grades for the 4-essay question mid-term exam for your class and listed the points of each question, you were surprised to find that in one question, you only missed one minor point; however, Professor Smith graded that you answered the whole question wrong. This grade will eventually affect your getting a better final grade in this important course.
2	The cashier charged you \$25.99 for a book in the bookstore on campus. When you walked to the door, you were looking at the receipt and noticed the price was \$23.99. That is, the cashier overcharged you by 2 dollars.
3	You are doing a major group project, which counted 30 percent of the final grade with one of your classmates. Both of you will get the same grade on this project. Your partner doesn't contribute much and you have to do most of the work. Besides this project, you have other studies to work on. You are very overwhelmed.
4	A few days before finals week, a classmate asked to borrow your notebook containing notes for the entire semester. Your classmate promised to return the notes to you the next day, so you agreed to lend them. However, the third day arrived and your classmate still gave no indication of returning the notes. You were in need of the notes to review for the finals.
5	One of your neighbors plays Rock & Roll music loudly till midnight almost every weekend night. However, this Sunday night, you had to go to sleep early and get ready for tomorrow's exam.
6	You went to eat in a restaurant. When the food was served, you found that the meat was not fresh and tasted spoiled.
7	It was only two weeks before the finals. Professor Mary Luke, who teaches one of your major courses, unexpectedly assigned a 10-page paper, which had not been on the syllabus to the class. You have other final papers, projects and final exams to work on.
8	One of your neighbors, Judy seldom tightly closes the door of the garbage can after she throws the garbage into it. You are the closest resident to this garbage can. The bad smell of the garbage and the flies bother you a lot. Today, she does that again when you see her near the garbage can.

Social variables in the situations and situational variations

When designing these 8 situations, I considered the social distance and social power relative to the Hearer (H) and the Speaker (S), as well as the severity of the wrong.

Of Brown and Levinson's (1987) three factors of power, distance, and rank of imposition, they were all under investigation in the study. As previously introduced,

social distance tells the degree of the familiarity and solidarity that the Hearer and the Speaker share with each other; social power has to do with the power of the speaker with respect to the hearer, which reflects the degree to which the speaker can impose his or her will on the hearer; rank of imposition is considered as the severity of wrong, which means how serious the offensive act is in the situation.

Of social power, social distance and the severity of the wrong in the study, only social distance could be clearly determined in each situation. However, social power and the severity of wrong were more complicated to categorize.

In Situation 1, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8, the Speaker (S) and the Hearer (H) know each other. That is, they share very high familiarity and there is no social distance between them. However, the social status between the H and S vary in the situations. In Situation 1 and 7, S is a student, and H is a professor. The H has a higher social status. Also in these two situations, the professor hold the right to decide to give or correct the students' grade or assignment, consequently the professor (the Hearer) holds a higher social power over the S. In situation 3 and 4 (H is a classmate), and situation 5 and 8 (H is a neighbor), H and S know each other, therefore, have equal social status. Further, in "classmate" situations, neither the Speaker nor the Hear has a more dominant power, that is, S and H have the same social power. In Situation 2 and 6, H were service people, who shared little familiarity with the Speaker. Though H and S' s social status is essentially equal, the social power is not necessarily equal. In Chinese culture, there is a famous saying, "Customer is the God". Therefore, the customer (Speaker) is considered to have more social power than the service person (Hearer). In American culture, the customer usually has the control of the money, and therefore, may have a greater social power than the service person does. However, in Situation 2, the customer (Speaker) was overcharged, the service person (Hearer) had the control of the overcharged money. In this case, H might have more social power than S.

As in real life, the severity of wrong is not easy to set a clear-cut line to determine. In the "professor" situations, the severity of wrong was especially complicated. The problem in Situation 1 was that the professor gave an unfairly low

grade to the student, which was seemingly a very serious wrong. But it might be only the professor's oversight, and therefore, easy to fix. Furthermore, the professor's wrong could be either a factual wrong (the professor miscounted the points on the test) or a judgement (the student had expected a higher grade than the professor could give, and therefore thought the professor unfairly graded the test paper). In Situation 7, the professor gave the whole class an unexpected assignment right before the final week, which could be a bigger problem for the students to handle. Even though the professor has power over the students, she might be considered to have abused the right to give the students assignments. On the other hand, the wrong in situation 1 affected the Speaker as an individual more than the one in situation 7. In situation 7, the professor assigned the unexpected paper to the whole class; therefore, students might think that it was fair.

In one word, when people carry out a face-threatening speech act such as complaining, they have to weigh these three factors—social distance, social power and the severity of the wrong. Consequently all these factors might have some influence on the subjects' production of complaints. Thus, they are the variables considered in the study. Table 3.2 summarizes the brief description of the situations and the major variable parameter--social distance, in the study.

Since social power and the severity of wrong were very complicated, they were not listed in this summary table. However, they did receive consideration in the study.

In these 8 situations, social distance between the speaker (S) and the hearer (H) is an important variable parameter. Only in situation 2 and 6 do H and S not know or not identify each other. Thus, they share a very low degree of familiarity and solidarity, which is indicated by "+SD" meaning a large social distance between H and S. In the other situations, the relationships between the H and S are a professor and a student, a classmate and a classmate, a neighbor and a neighbor. They all know each other. There is an affiliation between S and H. "--SD" means no/little social distance between S and H.

Table 3.2 Situations and the major variables considered in the study:

Complaining situations	Relationship of the two parties	Social distance (Familiarity)
1. Professor gave an unfairly low grade	Professor (H) and Student (S)	--SD
2. Being overcharged on a book	Cashier (H) and Customer (S)	+SD
3. Classmate contributed little to a group project	Classmate (H) and Classmate (S)	--SD
4. Classmate did not returned the notebook	Classmate (H) and Classmate (S)	--SD
5. Neighbor makes noise	Neighbor (H) and Neighbor (S)	--SD
6. Being served bad food in a restaurant	Waiter/waitress(H) And Customer (S)	+SD
7. Professor assigned an unexpected assignment	Professor (H) and Student (S)	--SD
8. Neighbor didn't shut the garbage can tightly	Neighbor (H) and Neighbor (S)	--SD

Self-report questionnaire

The second instrument I used was a self-report questionnaire. Based on the need to answer my research questions, I roughly categorized the questions I designed into three groups.

The first group of questions was targeted toward Chinese ESL learners' awareness of the differences between Americans and Chinese in terms of complaining, such as whether Americans complain more in general than Chinese people do, whether Americans complain more directly to a superior (such as complain to a professor as a student), further whether these Chinese students had complained more since they came to the U.S and the reasons for any differences in terms of their frequency of complaining.

The second group of questions dealt with how Chinese ESL learners acquire the pragmatic competence in the particular speech act of complaining. The questions include whether the students translate their complaints directly from

Chinese to English, and what their biggest obstacle is when they want to complain in English.

The third group of questions is closely related to the Discourse Completion Task (DCT) form, and solicits Chinese ESL learners' comments on their choices to opt out, if any, in the 8 situations on the DCT form. See Appendix D for the complete Self-report Questionnaire.

Subjects

Totally, there were 94 Chinese and American subjects in this study. All these subjects gave me their consent to participate in this study, after I had obtained permission from the Human Subjects Committee at Iowa State University. All these subjects were familiar with the school settings and the student life in an American university. The situations I designed on my DCT form were all chosen from the real life settings for graduate students in an American university.

Chinese ESL subjects and their English proficiency levels

To make sure my Chinese subjects possessed the necessary linguistic and grammatical competence to produce the complaints, I looked at (a) their TOEFL score (at least 550) upon entrance to a graduate program at an American university, (b) the English language classes they took when they came to the U.S.A, and (c) their performance on a cloze test. This test is the third part of the CELSA (**C**ombined **E**nglish **L**anguage **S**kills **A**ssessment). Designed in a 4-choice multiple choice cloze format and in natural and authentic language, the CELSA aims to assess and place high school, college and adult ESL students quickly and accurately and is used to place students into low beginning to advanced plus levels (Association of Classroom Teacher Testers). This test was suitable for assessing all the Chinese subjects' current English proficiency level in the study.

In the cloze test I used, there were 25 items. I set 18 out 25 (above 70%) correct as the cutting off line to make sure that my Chinese subjects had the minimum English efficiency level. In other words, all the Chinese subjects who participated in this class were required to get at least 18 correct in the 25-item multiple-choice format cloze test.

The 32 Chinese students in group One are those who had been in the United States for at least two and a half years. They are called longer-term residents (LTRs); 15 of them were female, 17 male. 28 of them were currently enrolled graduate students working on either a Ph.D. degree or a master's degree at a Midwest university. 4 of them graduated with either a master's degree or a Ph.D. degree from a Midwest university in January, May or August, 2000. The average length of the LTRs' residence in the U.S was 3.2 years. All the longer-term residents got at least 20 on the cloze test. The range of their scores on the cloze test was from 20 to 25. Their average score on the cloze test was 22.3. All of them had a TOEFL score of at least 550 on a paper-based TOEFL test.

The 30 Chinese ESL students in the other group had been in the United States for merely half a year at the time when the data were collected from them. In this study, they are called shorter-term residents (STRs); 15 of them were female and 15 of them were male. They were all enrolled graduate students at a Midwest university. The range of their scores on the cloze test was from 18 to 24. Their average score on the cloze test was 20.6. Their TOEFL scores were all above 550 on a paper-based TOEFL test.

In summary, all the Chinese subjects got a TOEFL score above 550 with an average of about 600. They did well on the cloze test. Some of them had taken ESL classes in the U.S.A. The Chinese subjects' scores on TOEFL and the cloze test, and the ESL classes they took, had ensured that they had a high English proficiency level and were advanced English learners.

Further, all these Chinese students were from Mainland China and had been in the U.S. Midwest areas. Therefore, they have been exposed to similar Chinese and American cultures and American language. They were currently students or were students within the past year. They had some general similarity in age, education, and socioeconomic background. None of these students was studying in English, linguistics or a related graduate program in the U.S. Because the Chinese subjects had no professionally trained awareness or knowledge of English linguistics or interlanguage pragmatics, they were considered as a source for natural data.

Native speakers of American English

The native English-speaking subjects were randomly chosen enrolled graduate students at a Midwest university. They were all originally from Midwest America and had never taken any linguistics classes. In terms of age, educational background, and American cultural influence, they were similar to my Chinese subjects.

Table 3.3 Three Groups of Subjects' Ethnographic Information

	Gender	Age	TOEFL	Average Length of Staying in the U.S.	Cloze Test	Degrees Pursued
L(32)	Female:15 Male: 17	20- 35	621+: 17 591-620:12 551-590: 3	3.2 years	22.3 (20- 25)	Ph.D:24 Master's: 4 Non- student:4
S(30)	Female:15 Male: 15	20- 35	621+: 13 591-620: 15 551-590:2	0.5 year	20.6 (18- 24)	Ph.D: 20 Master's: 11
A(32)	Female:17 Male: 15	20- 50	N/A	N/A	N/A	Ph.D:14 Master's: 18

(* Note: L= longer-term residents, S = Shorter-term residents, A =American subjects)

Table 3.3 reveals the ethnographic information of the three groups of subjects in the study.

Data-Analysis System

I handed out or emailed the data-collection instruments to the subjects. I got the LTRs' and STRs' names from the local Chinese students' associations. I got most of my American female subjects from the WISE (Women in Science and Engineering) program at a Midwest university who responded to my "research-help" note sent to the program's e-mail list. I got the other Americans' names and the e-mail addresses from their departments' web pages. All the subjects either e-mailed or mailed the completed task forms and the questionnaires to me.

The major part of the data in my study are the complaints that American and Chinese students made in the 8 situations on the DCT form.

The data-analysis of this study consists of the following parts.

Semantic components in the complaints

As previously mentioned, one of the major advantages of the DCT method is that it is useful for gaining an initial classification of semantic formula and strategies that will occur in natural speech. I wanted to make the best use of this advantage. Therefore, the semantic components in the complaint were my major focus of analysis. To cover every part of the complaining utterances--a phrase, a clause, a sentence, or sentence combination--I adopted the semantic components analysis system developed by Schaefer and Giddens in their 1981 and 1982 parallel studies. However, after a rough analysis, I found that not all semantic components occurring in the data of my study fit into this system which were used for analyzing complaints produced by American and Spanish speakers in Giddens' and Schaefer's studies. Thus, considering the Chinese-American cross-cultural comparative nature of my study, I modified their data-analysis system slightly by deleting a component---valuation, and adding more sub-categories and adding more meanings to some of the categories. I borrowed some sub-categories and their terms from the Cross-cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) done by Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989).

I broke the complaints into the following seven components (the order is not necessarily the one in which they occur in a complaint, though):

(1) Opener (O)--an utterance to initiate the speech act set.

There are two sub-categories in the Opener:

A: alerters, which serve as attention-getters. They are address terms such as "Tom", "Baby", "Excuse me", "Hi," "Hello", etc.

B: alerters + small talk (conversation with topics having nothing to do with the complaining act in the given situation, e.g. "How are you?" "Nice day, isn't it?" "How's your family?")

(2) Orientation (OR)—an utterance to get the Hearer prepared for the speech.

There are three sub-categories:

A: an utterance introduces the S's identity and/or intent in initiating the complaint, such as "I am your next door neighbor", "Could you do me a favor?"

B: a reminder to the H about the problem or the situation, "I bought a book here just now."

C: an utterance to check the availability or willingness of the H. "Do you have time now?" "Can I ask you a question?" "Could you do me a favor?"

(3) Act Statement (AS)--an utterance to state the problem or trouble source or to state any negative feelings about H or the offensive act. "You overcharged me," "You made a mistake in grading my paper." "It is terrible!" "It is unfair that you misgraded this question!"

(4) Justification (J)--an utterance to mitigate the force of the speech. There are three sub-categories.

A: Justification of the Speaker (JS)--an utterance to explain why S personally makes the complaint, e.g. "I worked very hard on this test."

B: Justification of the Hearer (JH)--an utterance to give a reason for the H's having committed the wrong, e.g. "I can understand that you might really be very busy, me too"

C: Justification of Both H and S (JHS)-- an utterance to declare the common ground that H and S share, inclusive "we" is usually used, for example, "We are a team", "Both of us are busy this semester."

(5) Remedy (R) --an utterance to request an action to rectify the wrong. There are three sub-categories:

A: a demand, e.g. "Give me another fresh dish."

B: a request in the question form. E.g. "Could you give me a refund?"

C: a threat, which is a type of remedy in which the complainer states an action to rectify the situation. E.g. "Or I would call the police."

(6) Closing (C)---an utterance concludes the S's turn at speaking. Typical expressions are "Bye-bye", "I would really appreciate that", "Thanks".

I marked the components in all my data of complaints. I cite the following examples to illustrate how I did the marking. All the examples hereafter are from my own study. Example 3.1 is a complaint produced by a Chinese LTR in situation 1.

Example 3.1

Opener	Act Statement	Remedy	Closing
Excuse me, Professor Smith,	There might be something wrong with your grading of my test paper. I only missed one minor point in the question, but you graded the whole question as wrong.	Would you please recheck it for me?	Thanks

The second sample of a complaint is chosen from a Chinese longer-term resident's complaints in Situation 5, "the neighbor is making a lot of noise"

Example 3.2

Opener	Orientation	Justification of the Speaker	Remedy	Closing
Excuse me, Sir	I am your next door neighbor	I have an exam tomorrow and I have to sleep early tonight.	I was wondering if you could turn down the music a little bit.	Thanks.

Thus, I broke down each complaint into its semantic components and then I counted the occurrence of each component across the 8 situations. If there is more than one utterance of one semantic component, I counted the semantic component as occurring only once in the complaint. For example, in the following complaint, there are two Remedy utterances:

Example 3.3

"Hey, xx (classmate's name), can we talk about the project? (Opener) I was wondering if you could pick up some more of the workload here. (Remedy) I have a lot to do for other classes and I'm feeling pretty overwhelmed (Justification). Maybe we can talk again about how we divided up the work and how you're doing with the parts that you're supposed to be doing. (Remedy).

In the above sample, I only considered the semantic component of Remedy occurring once although there are two utterances.

The two key components in a complaint—Act Statement and Remedy

After identifying the 6 semantic components in the complaints, I noticed that in the speech act of complaining, there are two key functioning components: Act Statement and Remedy. Either of them, or the combination of either of them with the other semantic component(s) such as opener, justification, valuation and closing, can perform the speech act of complaining. That is, the complaint can be expressed across a Remedy and/or an Act Statement utterance. Therefore, the two major components, Act Statement and Remedy, received major and close examination in my data analysis.

In the study, 669 complaints (233 by LTRs, 219 by STRs, and 217 by Americans) were collected and analyzed, although there should have been 752 complaints produced by 94 subjects (32 LTRs, 30 STRs and 32 Americans). There were 73 cases in which subjects did not produce a complaint at all; that is, they opted out (20 LTRs, 19 by STRs, 34 by Americans). In addition, a response did not have an Act Statement or Remedy was not considered a complaint in my study. Examples are (1) “What’s the due date?” (by No. 13 LTR in Situation 7), (2) “OK, I will do it as you said. Thank you” (No. 24 STR in Situation 7). In these responses, there is no Act Statement (an utterance pointing out the specific problem or trouble source, that is, making noise, the paper is not on the syllabus, etc) or Remedy (an utterance indicating specifically how to rectify the wrong) as I defined in the study. Thus, they were not counted as the complaints I needed for my study.

Since the Act Statement and Remedy are considered the two key components in a complaint in the study, I focused on analyzing these two components in the following parts—the patterns revolving around the two key components, the politeness strategies in the utterances of Act Statement, the direct and indirect strategies in Remedy.

The patterns of the key components in the complaints

I decided to focus on the patterns revolving around Act Statement and Remedy to answer the research question. Taking Act Statement and Remedy as two key components, there are 3 patterns of the use of the two key components in the

complaints: (A) a combination of Act Statement and Remedy. (B) the use of Act Statement only and (C) the use of Remedy only. In all these three patterns, either the combination of these two core components or their independent use can occur with or without the combination of the other component(s). The following examples are provided to explain the categorization of the above three patterns.

(A) Act Statement and Remedy

(a) Act Statement followed by Remedy

Example 3.4

Excuse me, Sir (Opener), I don't like to complain, but I feel that your food is tasted spoiled and is there something wrong? (Act Statement) Could you please bring me another dish? (Remedy) (Complained produced by No. 8 LTR in Situation 6)

(b) Remedy followed by Act Statement

Example 3.5

Would you please close the garbage can tightly next time? (Remedy) I am really upset by the smell out of it. (Act Statement) (Complaint made by No. 17 in Situation 8)

(c) Act Statement and Remedy expressed in one utterance

Example 3.6

Professor Smith (Opener), I have worked very hard for this class, and I feel that I have a good grasp of the ideas we are covering (Justification). I think that I may have missed one point in this essay, but I would like you to explain why I got no credit for my response. (Remedy and Act Statement) (Complaint made by No. 5 American subject in situation 1)

(B) Act Statement only

Example 3.7

Excuse me (Opener), I think I got charged the wrong price on this book. (Act Statement) (Complaint made by No. 2 American subject in Situation 2).

(C) Remedy only

Example 3.8

Excuse me (Opener), would you please play your music at a lower volume? (Remedy) I want to sleep early and get ready for a test tomorrow (Justification). (Complaint made by No. 13 STR in situation 5).

Softeners in Act Statement utterances

Complaining is very face threatening. The speakers usually use some words or phrases to soften the force of the act. Here is an example. The utterance “it seems to me that you made a mistake on my test paper” is more indirect than “You made a mistake on my test paper”. “Seems” is a softener, which has made the tone of the utterance more indirect and more polite. The force of the complaining of the former is weaker. The use of the softeners in the study deserves some careful investigation and can provide answers to the question about the level of directness of the complaints.

I analyzed the softeners in the Act Statement of the complaints produced by both Americans and Chinese. The softeners were “may”, “might”, “maybe”, “seem”, “feel (like)”, “I (don’t) think”, “look like” “I am afraid”, “I wonder/am/was wondering”. I counted all the softeners occurring in the Act Statement utterances and compared their distribution across the situations.

Direct and indirect strategies in Request utterances in Remedy

I examined the direct and indirect strategies employed in the Remedy utterances by the subjects. I borrowed the following (in) direct strategies rating system from the data corpus of the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP, Blum-Kulka, House, Kasper, 1989). Nine requestive strategies were identified and were ranked in order by increasing degrees of indirectness on the basis of their formal as well as their functional features.

1. Mood Derivable “Clean up the kitchen!”
2. Performative “I ask/request you to clean up the kitchen.”
3. Hedged Performative “I’d like to ask you to clean up the kitchen.”
4. Locution Derivable “You should/have to clean up the kitchen.”
5. Want Statement “I’d like/want/wish you to clean up the kitchen.”
6. Suggestory Formula “How about cleaning up the kitchen?”
7. Query Preparatory “ Can/Could you/we clean up the kitchen?”
8. Strong Hint “The kitchen is in a mess.”
9. Mild Hint “ Whose duty is it today?”

The nine strategies were categorized into three levels of directness: Direct strategies (No.1 to No.5), Strategy 6 and 7 belong to Conventional Indirectness (CID), and the last two “hints” strategies are so called Non-conventional indirectness (NCID).

According to Searle (1975), CID refers to the standardized utterances to perform only those acts conventionally designated for certain functional purposes which are not assigned to them, in their grammatical forms. A widely cited example is “can you pass me the salt?”, both the means---the kind of ability question that is used as an indirect utterance, and the form, the exact wording (“can you” as opposed to ‘are you able to’) are conventionalized to signal the illocutionary force (See Zhang, 1995).

In this study, the requestive utterances categorized under Remedy in the speech act of complaining are a little different from those in the speech act of request. The hints were actually similar to the Act Statement of complaining in the study. Therefore, there are only two broad categories of direct and indirect strategies in the study. Direct strategies include the utterances in such linguistic forms as “I would like/ want/hope/think”, “(Please) do it”. All the threat utterances were put in this category. Following are some examples of the utterances labeled as direct strategies in the study:

1. “We have to do this project together.”
2. “Please close the door.”
3. “I would like my \$2 refund.”
4. “I want to change it for a fresh one.”
5. “If you don’t contribute to this important project, I won’t help you do everything about it.” (a threat)
6. “I need my notes back. Do you want to meet me somewhere to give them back, or should I just stop by later tonight?”
7. “but I would like you to explain why I got no credit for my response.”
8. “turn it down.”

As to the CID strategies, I included the utterances in linguistic forms such as “Could/can you (I, we)...” “would you mind...” “I would appreciate it if ...” “I wonder/was/am wondering if...” “Is it/would it be possible..” “How about...” “why not...” “Is there any/some way...” Following are some examples of the Remedy utterances from the CID strategies.

1. “May I get partial credit for this question?”
2. “Would you please double-check the receipt?”
3. “I was wondering if you could pick up some more of the workload here.”
4. “Could you bring it to me tomorrow?”
5. “Will you please lower your volume?”
6. “Could I order another dish?”
7. “Would it be possible for me or even the class to get an extension on the due date?”
8. “Is there any way you could make sure that the garbage can is closed tightly?”

Request perspectives in Remedy utterances

The utterances of Remedy are all requests. The Speaker requests the Hearer to do something to either rectify the wrong or the situation. The request can be made from the point of the view from the Hearer, the Speaker, or both H and S, etc. In this study, I found that there were four request perspectives in the Remedy utterances. I borrowed the coding system of this part from Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper’s coding manual. In cases of embedded structures, coding relates to the verb in the main clause. I only counted “you” or “I” as the Hearer or Speaker dominance. Imperatives and impersonal utterances were included in other.

A. Hearer Dominance

Examples are,

“Could you please return my notebook?”

“Would you mind to take a look at my answer to this question?”

B. Speaker Dominance

Examples are,

“Could I ask you to turn down your music?”

“I want a refund for my serve.”

“I wonder if I could get my notes back “

“I’m wondering if you could give us more time for this paper.”

C. Speaker and Hearer Dominance

Examples are:

“Could we talk about how is it going?”

“Could we sit down and look it over?”

D. Other. In this category, neither Hearer Dominance (“You”) nor Speaker Dominance (“I”) nor both Hearer and Speaker Dominance (“we”) is used, rather “people” “one”, “they” or “it” is used to start the Remedy utterance. Also directive imperative is included in this category. Examples are:

“Is there some way I can get a better dinner?”

“Please close the door.”

I counted the frequencies of the 5 types of request perspectives. When there was more than one Remedy utterances in one complaint, I counted the perspective of the request in each utterance. Therefore, the total number of the Remedy utterance is a little more than the occurrence of the Remedy as a semantic component.

Opting out choice

In addition to the analysis of the complaints, I also investigated the opting choices across the 8 situations made by three groups of subjects. The occurrences of the opting out and the reasons provided by the subjects were examined and compared.

Answers on the questionnaire

Another part of my data is the questionnaire to two groups of Chinese subjects. I used the answers Chinese students provided mainly to support my interpretation of my data analysis and seek some possible clues to Chinese ESL

learners' problems or success in acquiring and developing their pragmatic competence in performing the speech act of complaining.

Development and problems of Chinese ESL learners' pragmatic competence

This part summarizes the major differences and similarities found in the complaints produced by Chinese and American students. From all these differences and similarities, I tried to identify both linguistic and pragmatic development and problems of Chinese ESL learners' pragmatic competence, especially in the speech act of complaining.

Summary

This chapter introduced the methodology of the study, including the participants, the data-collecting instruments and the data-analysis system.

There were three groups of participants, 32 Chinese longer-term residents (LTRs), 30 Chinese shorter-term residents (STRs) and 32 Americans. About half of them were female.

The major data-collecting instrument was a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) form soliciting the complaints from the subjects in 8 hypothetical situations. The situational variation and social factors in the 8 situations were identified and discussed. For the Chinese subjects, a self-report questionnaire was also used to get insights concerning their perception, acquisition and development of pragmatic competence in complaining.

The data coding-system was essential to the data analysis. A complete complaint was broken into 6 semantic components: Opener, Orientation, Justification, Remedy, Act Statement and Closing. Act Statement and Remedy were considered two key components. The use of the semantic components was analyzed. Two key components received extensive analysis in the study--- the major patterns of the complaints revolving around the two key components, the softeners in the Act Statement, the Request perspective and direct and indirect strategies adopted in the Remedy.

The findings will be presented and discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis was conducted to determine any possible similarities and differences in the complaints produced by the three groups of subjects in the study. This chapter presents the results of the data analysis and the answers to the research questions posed for this study.

There are 6 major parts of this chapter. Part 1 deals with the complaints, which are broken into 6 semantic components, the subjects' opting out choices and their reasons for opting out. Part 2 provides answers to the research question regarding the level of the directness of the complaints. The discussions focus on the use of softeners in the Act Statement, direct strategies and conventional indirect strategies in the Remedy, and the external build-ups serving as supportive moves in the complaints. Part 3 summarizes the influences the social variables and situational variations on the subjects' complaints, which have been discussed all along in Parts 1 and 2. Part 4 discusses Chinese ESL students' perception of complaining in the United States, and their acquisition of pragmatic competence in complaining. After all the comparisons of the differences and the discussions about them, Part 5 presents Chinese ESL students' pragmatic and linguistic development as well as problems demonstrated in their complaints. Lastly, in Part 6, this chapter concludes with a summary of all the findings and the discussions.

The Complaints and the Opting Out Choices

Use of semantic components across all Situations

The results of this part attempt to answer the research question: what are the differences between Chinese and Americans' complaints in the use of the semantic components?

In the study, 669 complaints, (233 produced by Chinese LTRs, 219 by Chinese STRs, 217 by Americans), were analyzed. A complete complaint was broken into six semantic components: Opener, Orientation, Justification, Act Statement, Remedy, and Closing, although not all the complaints had all these semantic formulas, and also they were not necessarily in the above listed order. The

two key components are Act Statement and Remedy. Either of these two key components, or the combination of either of these two components with the other component, can perform a speech act of complaining. A report of the frequency of the use of the 6 semantic components is followed by the detailed information about the use of individual components.

The frequency of the use of 6 semantic components in the complaints across the 8 situations is shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Occurrences of the six semantic components across 8 situations

	Opener	Orientation	Justification	Act Statement	Remedy	Closing	N=
L	180	27	102	136	180	36	233
S	157	27	95	148	193	43	219
A	101	9	77	153	163	10	217

(*Note: L= Chinese longer-term residents, S =Chinese shorter-term residents, A= American subjects)

I used the chi-squared test to analyze my data. Specifically the “chi-squared test for independence” and associated p-values correspond to a test of interactive effects. The interactive effect is high when different groups respond differently to the different situations. The “chi-squared statistic for equal rows” tests if one of the three groups is more likely to respond, summing over all of the situations. The “chi-squared statistic for equal columns” tests if one of the situations is more likely to elicit a response summing over all groups.

In the use of the 6 semantic components, a significant difference was found of interactive effect ($\chi^2 = 39.33472$, $df=6$, $p<0.005$). Further, significant differences were found of the use of the 6 semantic components between the three groups of subjects ($\chi^2 = 24.02941$, $df=2$, $p<0.005$). Also the use of these 6 semantic components was found to be significantly different ($\chi^2 = 637.5229$, $df = 7$, $p = 0$).

Among the 6 semantic components, Chinese ESL learners produced a relatively higher frequency of the use of the following 5 components than Americans

did: Opener, Orientation, Justification, Remedy and Closing. But Americans used the component of Act Statement more than Chinese ESL learners did.

Generally speaking, Opener, Justification, Act Statement and Remedy are significantly more frequently used than Orientation and Closing by the subjects.

Following are the results of the analysis of the use of the individual components; first are the four non-core components: Opener, Orientation, Justification and Closing. Next will be the analysis of the use of two core components: Act Statement and Remedy.

Opener

In general, Chinese ESL learners used more utterances of Opener than Americans did. However, both American and Chinese students show very similar tendency in the use of Opener across the situations. (See Table 4.2)

Table 4.2 Occurrences of Opener across the 8 Situations

	Professor		Service Person		Classmate		Neighbor		Total
	(1)	(7)	(2)	(6)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(8)	N
L	27	22	28	24	16	20	18	25	180
	(15%)	(12%)	(16%)	(13%)	(9%)	(11%)	(10%)	(14%)	(100%)
S	23	21	24	23	16	20	19	21	157
	(15%)	(13%)	(15%)	15%)	(11%)	(13%)	(12%)	(13%)	(100%)
A	24	12	17	13	5	12	5	13	101
	(24%)	(12%)	(17%)	(13%)	(5%)	(12%)	(5%)	(13%)	(100%)

(*Note: L= Chinese longer-term residents, S =Chinese shorter-term residents, A= American subjects)

In the use of Opener, no significant difference was found for the interactive effect. No significant difference in the use of Opener was found between the groups of subjects. However, a significant difference in its use was found across the situations ($\chi^2 = 19.5$, $df = 7$, $p < 0.05$). As shown in the table, both Americans and Chinese used more Openers in the “professor” situations and “service person” situations than in the “classmate” and “neighbor” situations. The very possible

reason is that Professor as a Hearer has more social power or holds a higher social status than the Student (the Speaker) is. The students tended to address the professor, and showed respect to the professor. In the situations when the Hearer was a service person, there was a very large social distance between the Hearer and the Speaker; therefore, an Opener could be an icebreaker to get the service person's attention, or initiate the intended speech. Following are some examples:

Example 4.1

"Excuse me, Professor Luke (Opener), since this paper is not on the syllabus of the course (Act Statement) and we're very busy during this busy time of final week (Justification), would you please postpone the deadline of this paper, or if possible, cancel it (Remedy)? " (No. 31 STR's response in situation 7)

Example 4.2

"Waiter (Opener), this meat is spoiled (Act Statement). Please take it back and bring me a new meal (Remedy)." (No. 11 American subject's response in situation 6)

In "classmate" and "neighbor" situations, the Speaker and the Hearer personally know each other. There is no social distance between them. Further, they keep equal social status. Therefore, the Speaker might not need to use an Opener to start the conversation. Instead, the Speaker might start the speech directly. Following are some examples in which there was no Opener.

Example 4.3

"I know you really enjoy your music (Justification) but I'm wondering if you could keep it kind of low tonight (Remedy). I have to get to bed early because I have an exam in the morning (Justification)." (No. 15 American subjects' response in Situation 5)

Example 4.4

"Could you please spend more time on this project (Remedy)? We are supposed to share the overload of this project and get the same grade, but I think I spent much more time that you did. I have other studies to work on and I can not handle the workload now (Justification)." (No. 1 LTR's response in Situation 3)

Another important difference found in the use of Opener is the different frequency of the use of small talk. In the study, the small talk was included in the

Opener since small talk all occurred in the beginning part of the complaint. In the study, the Speaker mainly used small talk to show concern, interest about H, or to stress the shared interest and concerns, or build a common ground between them. The small talk is external to the proposed action.

It was found that only Chinese ESL students used small talk (13 by LTRs and 4 by STRs), while American students never used it.

Following are two examples of the Opener in which small talk is included.

Example 4.5

"Hi, it seems that you really enjoy Rock 'n Roll, huh? I bet you are a Rock 'n Roll fan. (Opener with a small talk) I wonder whether you could turn down the volume a little bit on Sunday night (Remedy) since I have to sleep early and get ready for next day's exam (Justification). Thanks a lot (Closing). (No. 14 LTR's response in Situation 5)

Example 4.6

"Hello, Miss Judy, How are you doing these days? A nice day, isn't it?" (Opener with a small talk). By the way, could you help me close that garbage can behind you? (Remedy) Its smell is really bothersome (Act Statement). Thanks a lot. Nice to talk to you. See you. (Closing) (No. 19 LTR's response in Situation 8)

In summary, Americans used fewer Openers than Chinese students did. Further, Americans did not use any small talk at all in the Opener. The Americans' utterances in Opener were usually "Excuse me," "Professor/ Dr. xx ", "Hi", or a name. Chinese students used small talk in the Opener utterances.

Orientation

Orientation utterances are those introducing the Speaker' identity and/or intent in initiating the complaining, reminding the Hearer about the problem or situation or checking the availability or willingness of the H to carry out a possible Remedy. In this study, Orientation is the least used semantic component in the complaining. The possible reason might be that in most of situations, the Hearer and Speaker know each other and the problems are somewhat obvious to both sides. Like Justification, Orientations in the study functioned as supportive moves. The Speaker tended to use Orientations to remind H of the situation when the problem occurred, or to

identify Speaker to Hearer, or to give a reason for initiating the speech or to stress the shared interest or concerns.

Here are some examples of complaints with Orientation.

Example 4.7

"I am your neighbor in apartment x. It's already after ten o'clock. (Orientation)
Could you please turn the music down? (Remedy). Thank you (Closing).

Example 4.8

"Hey, guy! (Opener) Since we two are in the same group to do the same project, I think we should devote the same to it. (Orientation). It is unfair for me to do the most part while you'd not like to contribute as much as you can to the work (Act Statement). If you have any problems with it, why not come to me? Let's find out the way to solve the problems together. Wouldn't that be great (Remedy)? (No. 2 STR's response in Situation 3)

Totally, there are 63 occurrences of Orientation with 27 produced by LTRs, 27 by STRs, and 9 by American subjects. Table 4.3 illustrates the distribution of them across the situations.

Table 4.3 Occurrences of Orientation across the 8 situations

	Professor		Service Person		Classmate		Neighbor		Total
	(1)	(7)	(2)	(6)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(8)	N
L	6	1	3	0	4	2	6	5	27
	(22%)	(3%)	(11%)	(0)	(15%)	(7%)	(22%)	(19%)	(100%)
S	11	2	3	0	3	2	5	1	27
	(41%)	(7%)	(11%)	(0)	(11%)	(7%)	(19%)	(3%)	(100%)
A	4	0	1	0	3	0	1	0	9
	(44%)	(0)	(11%)	(0)	(33%)	(0)	(11%)	(0)	(100%)

(*Note: L= Chinese longer-term residents, S =Chinese shorter-term residents, A= American subjects)

As the table illustrates, Chinese ESL learners used relatively more Orientation than Americans did. Americans used Orientation totally 5 and 3 times respectively in "Professor" and "Service person" situations and almost never in the other two situations.

There is an unbalanced use of Orientation in the two “professor” situations. There is relatively more in situation 1 than 7. The reason might be that the students tried to remind the professor of the wrongly graded test.

However, Chi-squared results showed no significant differences in the use of Orientation either between the three groups of subjects or across the situations.

Justification

As previously introduced, the utterances of Justification were used to tell the reasons why the Speaker had to make the complaint. Also the Speaker used the Justification to mitigate or aggravate the intended speech, to attend the Hearer’s face concern. Further, Justification is instrumental to keep the harmony between the S and H. They are supportive moves external to the Act Statement and/or Remedy occurring either before or after them. The use of the Justification might reveal information about the level of the directness and politeness strategies. It could be influenced by the social distance and the severity of the wrong, etc. in the target situation.

In this study, totally, there are 274 Justification occurrences with 102 by Chinese longer-term residents (LTRs or L), 95 by Chinese shorter-term residents (STRs or S) and 77 by American subjects (Americans or A). Table 4.4 demonstrates the distribution of Justifications across the 8 situations.

Table 4.4 Occurrences of Justification across the 8 Situations

	Professor		Service Person		Classmate		Neighbor		Total
	(1)	(7)	(2)	(6)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(8)	N
L	11	16	0	0	23	22	25	5	102
	(12%)	(16%)	(0)	(0)	(23%)	(22%)	(25%)	(5%)	(100)
S	7	16	1	1	19	22	25	4	95
	(7%)	(17%)	(1%)	(1%)	(2%)	(23%)	(26%)	(4%)	(100)
A	5	10	1	0	18	19	23	1	77
	(6%)	(13%)	(1%)	(0)	(23%)	(25%)	(30%)	(1%)	(100)

(*Note: L= Chinese longer-term residents, S =Chinese shorter-term residents, A= American subjects)

The above table illustrates the numbers of the subjects who used Justification across the situations. Generally speaking, significantly more Chinese students used Justification than American Students did. Further, significant differences were found of the use of Justification between three groups of subjects ($\chi^2 = 16.07171$, $df=2$, $p<0.05$) and across the situations ($\chi^2 = 114.9442$, $df = 7$, $p=0$).

Three groups of subjects shared the same tendency toward the use of Justification across the situations. That is, Justification was almost never used in the Situation 2 and 6 when the Hearer was a service person. Justification was used mostly in Situation 3 and 4, the “classmate” situations. The frequency of the use of Justification in Situation 5 was different from Situation 8 though in both situations the Hearer was a neighbor, and Situation 1 from 7, the H was a professor. The tendency may be explained with reference to the social distance between S and H, and the severity of the offence in the situations.

In Situation 2 and 6, the Speaker and the Hearer (a service person) don't personally know each other; that is, the social distance between them is very large. The Speaker might not feel the necessity to use Justification (supportive moves) to attend the Hearer's face. Therefore, Justification was almost never used in these two situations by three groups of subjects. Following are some examples:

Example 4.9

“Excuse me (Opener), I think you overcharged 2 dollars on this book. The price on the receipt is \$23.99, but you charged me \$25.99 (Act Statement).” (No.1 LTR's responses in situation 2)

Example 4.10

“Waiter (Opener), I think there's something wrong with this food. I can't eat it. (Act Statement)” (No. 2 American subject's responses in Situation 6)

In the above responses, the speakers stated the problems directly, and no justification was taken to mitigate the intended speech act of the complaining.

On the other hand, all three groups of subjects used Justification most in Situation 3 and 4 when the Hearers are classmates. This indicated that the

Speakers tended to keep a positively intimate relationship with classmates. Following are some examples:

Example 4.11

"It's a hard term for us. There is always a lot of work to be done. What is your plan for our project?" (Justification) Shall we divide the work of the project between us? Then after our individual work, we can discuss together to finish it. (Remedy)" (No. 4 STR's responses in Situation 3)

Example 4.12

"xx, what grade do you want on this project? Because I'm working on keep my GPA up for a scholarship." (Justification) So far, I feel that I've been doing most of the work (Act Statement) and I could really use your help in finishing this project (Remedy)." (No. 10 American's responses in Situation 4)

When the Hearers were the same in Situation 1 and 7 (Professor), and in Situation 5 and 8 (Neighbor), there was an unbalanced frequency in the use of the Justification. In Situation 7 (Professor assigned an unexpected assignment), there were more Justification utterances used than in Situation 1 (Professor gave an unfairly low grade) by all three groups of subjects. The reason might be that the severity of the wrong seemed a little different in these two situations. The professor's wrong might be more serious in Situation 1 than in Situation 7. In situation 1, when the professor gave an unfairly low grade, the students might get offended, and thus, not tend to use justification but point out the wrong (that is, say the Act Statement) and request a Remedy directly. However, in Situation 7, the assignment was not on the syllabus and was unexpected. But it was assigned to the whole class. The Speaker, as an individual, might feel it was fair and therefore, was not very motivated to make a complaint. Furthermore, the fact that professors have the right to do assignment decisions is self-explanatory. Therefore, when the students/Speakers did try to make a complaint, and to challenge the professors about the unexpected the assignment, s/he would use more justifications to show their respect for the professor and/or emphasize their overwhelming situation to gain sympathy from the professor, and to seek some possible solutions to the problem—either reduce the length of the paper or cancel it.

In both Situations 5 and 8, when the Hearer was a neighbor, there was also a difference in the frequency of the use of Justification. All three groups of subjects used much more Justification in Situation 5 (Neighbor played music loud) than in Situation 8 (Neighbor didn't shut the garbage can tightly). The reason might be the fact that music, even in a loud volume, is more pleasant than the horrible garbage smell. Therefore, the Speakers might desperately want to get rid of the bad garbage smell, and forget to use some Justification to take care of the neighbor's face.

Closing

The majority of the Closing utterances produced by both Americans and Chinese students were expressing gratitude, such as "Thanks a lot", "Thank you", "I would appreciate that". The rest were utterances to bid farewell. Expressions were exclusively "Bye-bye", "Good-bye", and "See you." Table 4.5 shows the occurrences of Closing utterances across the situations.

Table 4.5 Occurrences of Closing across the 8 situations

	Professor		Service Person		Classmate		Neighbor		Total
	(1)	(7)	(2)	(6)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(8)	N=
L	4	0	2	3	0	4	14	9	36
	(11%)	(0)	(6%)	(8%)	(0)	(11%)	(39%)	(25%)	(100%)
S	8	3	2	3	0	5	12	10	43
	(17%)	(7%)	(5%)	(7%)	(0)	(12%)	(28%)	(23%)	(100%)
A	0	0	1	0	1	0	5	3	10
	(0)	(0)	(10%)	(0)	(10%)	(0)	(50%)	(30%)	(10%)

(*Note: L= Chinese longer-term residents, S =Chinese shorter-term residents, A= American subjects)

Among the 4 types of the situations, the "neighbor" situation got most of the Closing utterances from three groups of the subjects. The possible situations could be that the situational settings described on the DCT form were more easily leading the subjects to image real-life situations in which a Closing utterance is always necessary.

As a whole, Chinese used more Closing than Americans did (36 produced by LTRs, 43 by STRs, 10 by Americans). Furthermore, at least 90% of the Chinese students' Closing utterances expressed gratitude. They were either "Thanks" or "Thank you." Therefore, Chinese seemed to be more eager to show their gratitude to the H's possible remedy action, thereby minimizing the face threat to the H.

The sample size of the Closing utterances is too small to run a chi-square test.

Act Statement and Remedy

This part examines the use of the two key components---Act Statement and Remedy. I identified these two key components according to the definition of complaining I used for my study, "In the speech act of complaining, the speaker (S) expresses displeasure or annoyance---censure---as a reaction to a past or ongoing action, the consequences of which are perceived by S as affecting her unfavorably. This complaint is usually addressed to the hearer (H) whom the S holds, at least partially, responsible for the offensive action" (Olshtain and Weinbach, 1993:108). Accordingly, the speaker uses an Act Statement to express her or his "displeasure, or annoyance---censure". Remedy utterances remind the Hearer of her/his responsibility for the offensive action and that they are responsible to mend the offensive action.

The combination of these two components and the separate use of either of them deserves careful investigation.

Totally, there are 3 patterns of the use of the two key components: (A) a combination of Act Statement and Remedy. (B) the use of Act Statement alone; (C) the use of Remedy alone. In all of these three patterns, either the combination of these two core components or their independent use can occur with or without the combination of the other components, although they mainly occurred with at least one of the other 4 non-core components. The following examples are provided to explain the categorization of the above three patterns.

(A) Act Statement and Remedy

Example 4.13

"Excuse me (Opener), the meat is not fresh and tasted spoiled (Act Statement). Could you please check it (Remedy)?" (No. 2 LTR's response in Situation 6)

Example 4.14

"Hi, Smith (Opener), would you please read my exam paper again (Remedy)? This question I only missed one minor point, but you graded I answered the whole question wrong (Act Statement)." (No. 29 STR's response in Situation 1)

Example 4.15

Professor Smith (Opener), I have worked very hard for this class, and I feel that I have a good grasp of the ideas we are covering (Justification). I think that I may have missed one point in this essay, but I would like you to explain why I got no credit for my response. (Remedy and Act Statement) (Complaint made by No. 5 American subject in situation 1)

(B) Act Statement only

Example 4.16

"Sorry, Sir (Opener), I am afraid that the meat is not fresh and tasted spoiled (Act Statement). " (No. 30 LTR's response in Situation 6)

(C) Remedy only

Example 4.17

"Could you please turn down the volume of your music (Remedy)? I have to sleep early and get ready for tomorrow's exam. I am sorry about this (Justification). Thanks (Closing) (No. 2 LTR's response in Situation 5)

In total, there are 308 complaints in pattern A (86 by LTRs, 126 by STRs, and 96 by Americans), 132 complaints in pattern B (55 by LTRs, 24 by STRs, 53 by Americans), 229 complaints in Pattern C (92 by LTRs, 69 by STRs, 68 by Americans).

In the use of Pattern A (Act Statement + Remedy), no significant difference was found of the interactive effect. However, significant differences were found between the groups ($\chi^2 = 8.441558$, $df=2$, $p<0.05$) and across the situations ($\chi^2 = 25.66234$, $df=3$, $p<0.005$).

In the use of Pattern B (Act Statement Only), the sample size was too small for the interaction test. Significant differences were found between the subjects ($\chi^2 = 13.68182$, $df=2$, $p<0.05$) and across the situations. ($\chi^2 = 61.87879$, $df=3$, $p<0.05$).

In the use of Pattern C (Remedy Only), no significant difference was found for the interactive effect. No significant difference was found between the groups. However, significant difference in the use of Pattern C was found across the situations ($\chi^2=93.74236$, $df=3$, $p<0.005$).

Next, figures and tables are used to show how these three patterns of complaints were used differently between the groups and across the situations.

Figures 1, 2, 3 show the distribution of the three patterns of the complaints in 8 situations with four different types of hearers.

As Figure 1 shows, the use of pattern A is very balanced across the situations and between the subjects.

Figure 2 shows the use of Pattern B (Act Statement). Americans used this pattern significantly more than Chinese students did in the “professor” situations. The reason might be that the relationship between professors and students is more equal than that in China. Therefore, the American students seldom hesitate to use the semantic component of “Act Statement” in the complaints. However, Chinese students seem to still act under the influence of Confucianism, that is, not to challenge the professor.

Figure 3 displays the distribution of the Pattern C (Remedy only). Americans did not use this pattern at all in the “service person” situations. It seems that Americans tended to use “Act Statement” when the Hearer was a service person, while Chinese, by using more “Remedy only” patterns, were more interested in getting the problem solved than pointing out the wrong. The possible reason could be Chinese ESL students were a little shy or intimidated in this foreign country and were very careful in communication. But Americans were in their own country and were used to the freedom and ease to complain.

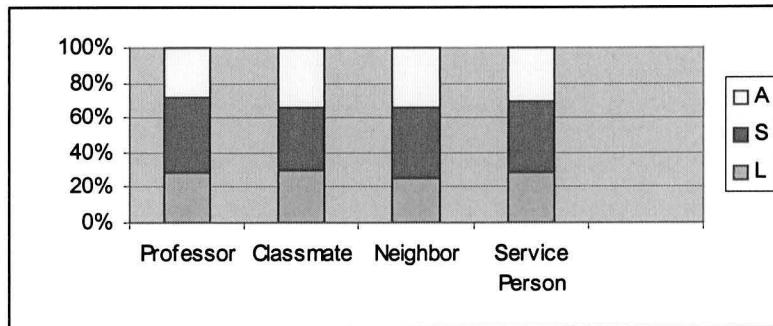


Figure 1: Pattern A= Act Statement + Remedy

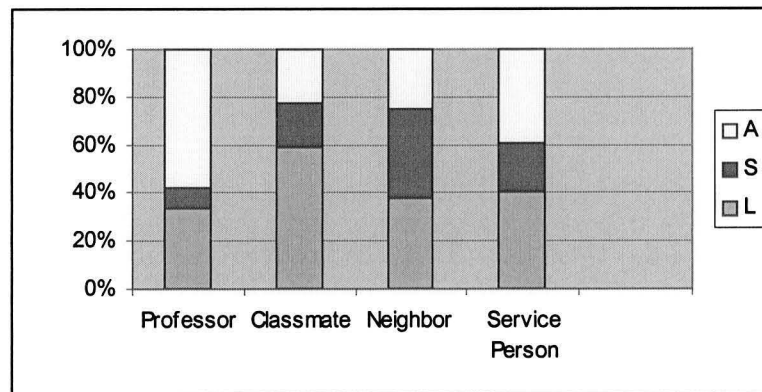


Figure 2: Pattern B= Act Statement Only

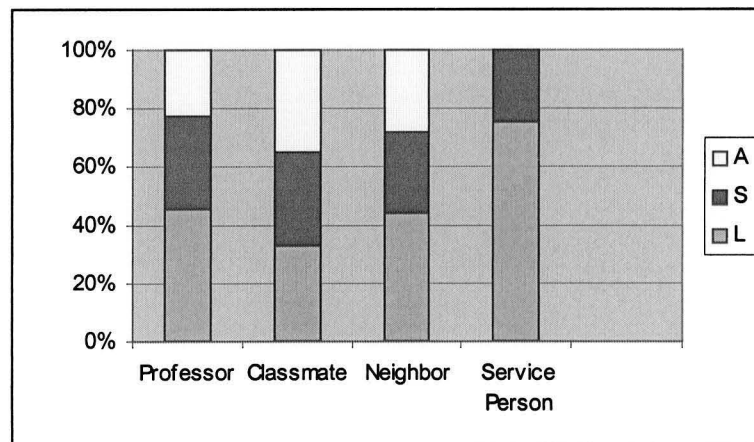


Figure 3: Pattern C= Remedy Only

Tables 6-8 tell more information about the use of the patterns.

As Table 4.6 illustrates, all three groups of subjects used pattern A most in “service person” situations and least in “classmate” situations. Totally there are 308 complaints in pattern A (86 by LTRs, 126 by STRs, and 96 by Americans).

Table 4.7 displays that three groups of subjects used Act Statement Only most in “service Person” situations and least in “classmate” situations. There are 132 complaints in Pattern B (55 by LTRs, 24 by STRs, and 53 by Americans)

Table 4.8 demonstrates that all three groups of subjects used “Remedy only” pattern most in “classmate” situations and least in “service person” situations. 229 complaints were produced in pattern C (92 by STRs, 69 by STRs, and 68 by Americans).

Table 4.6: Use of Pattern A (Act Statement + Remedy)

	Professor	Classmate	Neighbor	Service Person	N=
L	23 (27%)	14 (16%)	18(21%)	31 (36%)	86 (100%)
S	35 (28%)	17 (13%)	29 (23%)	45 (36%)	126 (100%)
A	23 (24%)	16 (17%)	24 (25%)	33 (34%)	96 (100%)

(*Note: L= longer-term residents, S = shorter-term residents, A= American subjects)

Table 4.7 Use of Pattern B (Act Statement Only)

	Professor	Classmate	Neighbor	Service Person	N=
L	11(20%)	13 (24%)	3 (5%)	28 (51%)	55 (100%)
S	3(13%)	4 (17%)	3 (13%)	14 (58%)	24 (100%)
A	19 (36%)	5 (9%)	2 (4%)	27 (51%)	53 (100%)

(*Note: L= longer-term residents, S = shorter-term residents, A= American subjects)

Table 4.8 Use of Pattern C (Remedy Only)

	Professor	Classmate	Neighbor	Service Person	N=
L	20 (22%)	33 (36%)	36 (39%)	3 (3%)	92 (100%)
S	14 (20%)	31 (45%)	23 (33%)	1 (1%)	69 (100%)
A	10 (15%)	35 (51%)	23 (34%)	0 (0)	68 (100%)

(*Note: L= longer-term residents, S = shorter-term residents, A= American subjects)

Therefore, a conclusion can be drawn that both Americans and Chinese tended to use most "Act Statement only " and least "Remedy only" patterns in "service person" situations. The main reason, I think, is that, in "service person" situations, the Speaker does not know the Hearer personally, that is, there is a big social distance between them, the subjects tended to use "Act Statement only" more and "Remedy only" least. However, it seems that, compared with "professor" "neighbor" and "service person", the subjects all tended to keep the most intimate relationship with the "classmate". Therefore, in the "classmate" situations, least Act Statement only pattern was used and most Remedy only pattern used in "classmate" situations by three groups of subjects.

Opting out choices and the reasons for opting out

As introduced in the Methodology chapter, the subjects opted out in 73 cases, 20 by LTRs, 19 by STRs and 34 by Americans. The differences of the situations in which the subjects opted out and the reasons for opting out were studied. (See table 4.9)

Table 4. 9 Opting out choices across the 8 situations.

	Professor (1) + (7)		Service person (2) + (6)		Classmate (3) + (4)		Neighbor (5)+ (8)	
L	2	7	0	2	3	0	3	3
S	0	7	0	0	6	1	3	2
A	0	10	2	1	9	0	4	8

(*Note: L= longer-term residents, S = shorter-term residents, A= American subjects)

It was a surprise that Chinese complained more than American students did. One of the reasons might be that the researcher of this study is a Chinese. The Chinese students might tend to show how well they could do in English on this task, and they didn't want to lose face in front of the researcher even though not many of them knew the researcher personally.

As to the situations where the subjects opted out, there is a similar tendency. All three groups of subjects tended to opt out in situation 3 (classmate contributed little to group project), 5 (Neighbor makes a lot of noise), 7 (Professor assigned an

unexpected assignment) and 8 (Neighbor doesn't shut the garbage can tightly). Therefore, it seems that both Americans and Chinese avoided complaining to people (neighbors, classmates, professors, etc.) who keep a very close social distance with them. However, when the wrong was severe, the students would not opt out. A case in point is that the least opting out choices were made by subjects in situation 1 "professor gave an unfairly low grade."

Reasons for opting out

The reasons that Chinese and Americans students gave for their opting out choices were very interesting.

In Situation 7 when the professor gave an unexpected assignment, most American and Chinese students who opted out indicated that professors have the right to assign students what they want. But some Chinese students emphasized that doing an assignment is the students' responsibility and students should be ready at any time for any unexpected task. Also three Chinese said "Do more and learn more", while no Americans made such comments.

Also Chinese and Americans hesitated to complain to their neighbors in situation 5 (neighbor played the music loudly) and 8 (neighbor didn't shut the garbage can tightly). Instead, they chose either to tolerate the situation or solve the problem by themselves. Some of the reasons are:

"I can fit to it. The apartments are shared by others and me." (No. 1 STR gave his reasons for opting out in situation 5)

"The solution, that is, to close the garbage can myself, is so easy to accomplish, that I wouldn't want to get into a potentially hostile confrontation over it." (No. 1 American subject's reasons for not complaining in Situation 8).

In summary, Americans and Chinese gave somewhat similar reasons for opting out. Chinese cultural influences had some influences on Chinese students, such as the Confucianism emphasizing the teacher's authority over the students—do not challenge the teacher and always do what the teacher assigns. Also the students' attitude to extra assignments, "Do more and learn more", reflects the emphasis on the Chinese students' responsibility in Chinese culture.

Level of Directness

Another important research question in the study is “What are the differences in the level of directness between Chinese and Americans’ complaints, if any?” The answer to part of the question is quite certain: Yes, there are differences between Chinese and Americans’ complaints. And Chinese seemed to have produced more indirect complaints than Americans have. The conclusion was drawn from the results of the analysis of the use of the following components in the complaints: the Small talk in Openers, the external linguistic build-ups and softeners in the Act Statement, and the request perspective in Remedy.

The external linguistic build-ups in the complaints

In a cross-cultural comparative study, it is always worthwhile to examine both cultures and their potential influences on the language learners. The study of the level of directness should be addressed in the cross-cultural framework.

Previous research literature has illustrated that Chinese tend to use external linguistic build-ups to attend to the Hearer’s face, to keep or protect the harmony between the Speaker and the Hearer; and to achieve indirectness. Small talk and supportive moves are strategies frequently adopted to achieve indirectness and politeness in Chinese cultural. Chinese use small talk and supportive moves to adjust the distance and relationship between Speaker and Hearer, and attend to both H’s and S’s face concerns for a harmonious result. Face-balance is central in Chinese face-work, which is an instrument to achieve politeness, indirectness and harmony (Zhang, 1995).

The findings of this study were consistent with the results from the previous studies. In this study, the external linguistic build-ups are Opening, Orientation, Justification and Closing. Chinese subjects were found to have used these components more than Americans did, which meant that Chinese were more indirect than Americans and also that Chinese still act under the influence of Chinese language and culture. Further, compared with the STRs, Chinese LTRs produced a similar, or even higher, in some cases, use of small talk in the Opener, the use of Orientation, Justification and Closing. Chinese influences stick to Chinese ESL

learners' practice of complaining in English with remarkable persistence. Even after three years' residence in the U.S., Chinese LTRs were still complaining somewhat in a Chinese way, though using English.

Brown and Levinson (1987) categorized small talk and supportive moves into positive politeness strategies. From this study, findings showed that Chinese used more positive politeness strategies than Americans did. Ji (2000) argued that certain polite verbal behaviors in Chinese culture tend to maintain positive face, which may make Chinese culture more positive-politeness oriented. The above results gained from my study somewhat supported Ji's argument.

As to the specific big difference between Chinese and Americans in terms of the use of small talk---Americans did not use any small talk and only Chinese were found to have used Small talk, I want to mention that according to observations and reports, in real life, Americans actually do use small talk. Therefore, it could be possible American subjects just focused on the task of complaining while did not consider the face concern. The issue of Americans' use of small talk should be addressed in future studies in naturalistic settings.

The use of the softeners in the Act Statement

Analyzing the use of softeners in the Act Statement has a twofold purpose: one, to seek answers to the research question in terms of the level of indirectness; the other, to find evidence of Chinese ESL students' pragmatic development with regard to the internal build-ups (such as softeners and hedges) to achieve indirectness.

Totally, there are 437 utterances of Act Statement produced, 136 by LTRs, 148 by STRs, and 153 by Americans. As introduced in my literature review, Chinese are found to tend to achieve indirectness mainly through external linguistic build-ups, i.e. small talk or supportive moves, rather than utterance internal devices, e.g., modals, particles, pronouns, etc. Therefore a close examination of Chinese ESL students' use of the so-called internal linguistic build-up such as modals and particles in their complaints may reveal some useful information to assess Chinese ESL students' pragmatic development.

Since complaining is a very face-threatening speech act, both American and Chinese students tried to be indirect and polite when they carried out the speech act. It was noticed that in Act Statements, both Chinese and Americans used a lot of softeners, which added the level of indirectness in the complaints. For example, No. 1 American subject made a response in Situation 1 (Professor gave an unfairly low grade),

Example 4.18

"Professor Smith, I noticed that my answer for one of the questions on the midterm differs, it seems, only a little bit from the answer you posted. Do you maybe think that I could get a few more points for this question than you gave me? I mean, maybe I'm not really that close, but it just seems based on the correct answer that you posted that I am really pretty close to having the correct answer. Would you mind looking at it again?" (response made by No. 1 American subject in situation 1)

In this response, the softeners "seem", "maybe" made the Act Statement very indirect.

The softeners used in the Act Statement utterances are "I (don't) think", "I feel (like)", "seem", "might", "may", "maybe", "I believe", "I wonder", "I was/am wondering", "I'm afraid" "kind of". Table 4.10 illustrates the three groups of subjects' use of softeners in the Act Statements.

As shown in table 4.10, American and Chinese students produced a very close frequency of the use of softeners than the Americans did. Therefore, from the use of the softeners in Act Statement, it is hard to decide whether Chinese or Americans complain more directly or indirectly.

Table 4.10 Use of Softeners in the Act Statement Utterances

	Occurrences of Act Statement	Total number of Softeners used	Frequency of the use softeners in each Act Statement
L	136	60	0.44
S	148	65	0.44
A	153	65	0.42

(*Note: L= Longer-term residents, S =Shorter-term residents, A = American subjects)

Also, the Chi-square test identified no significant differences in the use of Softeners between the subjects. However, significant differences were found in the use of the softeners across the four major types of situations ($\chi^2 = 179.8333$, $df=3$, $p=0$). Table 4.11 shows the distribution of the softeners across the situations.

Table 4.11 Distribution of the softeners across the situations

	Professor		Service Person		Classmate		Neighbor		Total
	(1)	(7)	(2)	(6)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(8)	N
L	17 (28%)	2 (3%)	2 (3%)	1 (2%)	20 (33%)	15 (25%)	1 (2%)	2 (3%)	60 (100%)
S	21 (32%)	2 (3%)	3 (5%)	4 (6%)	14 (22%)	19 (29%)	0 (0)	4 (6%)	65 (100%)
A	25 (38%)	4 (6%)	3 (3%)	1 (2%)	16 (25%)	13 (20%)	0 (0)	3 (5%)	65 (100%)

(*Note: L= Longer-term residents, S= Shorter-term residents, A= Americans)

As illustrated in Table 4.11, the softeners each group used in every situation are listed. Generally speaking, both American and Chinese students demonstrated similar tendency in the use of softeners across the situations. That is, they all tended to use more softeners in the “classmate” and “professor” situations, while they used fewer softeners when the Hearer was a service person or a neighbor. The possible reasons could be that the professor (H) has more social power and keeps a higher social status than a student (S) does, so the students were very tactful in choosing their words when complaining to a professor. And the students usually tend to keep an intimate relationship with their classmates. Therefore, more softeners were found in the complaints made to the professor and the classmate.

An unbalanced use of softeners was found in two “professor” situations. The higher frequency of the use of softeners in Situation 1 than in Situation 7 by both Americans and Chinese might be due to the fact that the severity of wrong in Situation 1 seemed greater to the subjects. It implied that when the students realized the professors’ wrong, they were even more careful addressing the problem and they tended to use more softeners to mitigate the intended speech.

It seems that in the use of softeners in the utterances of Act Statement, the social distance and severity of wrong somewhat influenced the subjects' complaints. Chinese and Americans had very similar tendencies in the use of softeners across the situations.

Further, Chinese ESL students were found to have used a lot more "I (don't) think" than Americans. Chinese LTRs used 40 "I (don't) think", STRs used 40, while Americans used only 26. Here are some examples of complaints in which "I (don't) think" is used.

Example 4.19

"Excuse me (Opener), I think there was something wrong with my food. The meat is not very fresh and tasted spoiled. I like to come here but I never eat such bad food (Act Statement). Can you help me change another one? (Remedy) Thank you (Closing)." (No. 19 STR complained in Situation 6)

Example 4.20

"Professor Smith (Opener), could you talk about this question (Remedy)? I think I deserve more credit for my answer (Act Statement)?" (No.17 LTR complained in Situation 1)

Example 4.21

"Excuse me (Opener), I don't think this is fresh (Act Statement). Can you check it (Remedy)?" (No.6 LTR's response in Situation 6)

Chinese ESL learners' unusually higher frequency of the use of "I think" can be traced back to L1. One reason is that, although there are equivalents in Chinese to almost all the 8 softeners studied here, the Chinese equivalent to English "I think" is somewhat more frequently used in colloquial Chinese. Another possible reason explaining the higher frequency of the use of "I think" by Chinese ESL learners could be that "I think" is frequently cited phrase in the EFL textbook in China. Usually "I think" or "I don't think" is a frequent example used to teach the negation in English. There is an obvious difference in expressing negation between Chinese and English. For example, in English, a correct expression is "I don't think he is a good student." In Chinese, the proper way to say it is "I think he is not a good student." Chinese EFL/ESL learners usually make frequent mistakes in the negation expressions,

which has even been shown in this study—that is, many Chinese students made responses like “I think the food is not fresh” instead of “I don't think the food is fresh.” Therefore, the overemphasized sample use of “I think” might have impressed the students so much that they used it frequently in the study.

Direct and conventional indirect (CID) strategies in Remedy

Totally, there are 119 direct strategies used and 426 CID strategies used in the utterances of Remedy in the study.

The Chi-squared results displayed significant difference for the interactive effect ($\chi^2 = 25.69944$, $df=1$, $p<0.05$). No significant difference was found in the use of the strategies between the groups of subjects. However, significant differences were found between the use of direct strategies and that of CID strategies ($\chi^2 = 172.9339$, $df= 1$, $p=0$).

Table 4.12 shows the frequency of the strategies used by the three groups of subjects.

Table 4. 12 Frequency of the direct and CID strategies

	Direct Strategies	CID Strategies	Subtotal of Remedy utterances (N=)
L	25 (14%)	153(86%)	178 (100%)
S	34 (17%)	161(83%)	195 (100%)
A	60 (35%)	112(65%)	172 (100%)

(*Note: L= longer-term residents, S= shorter-term residents, A= American subjects)

Among the three groups, the two groups of Chinese subjects shared a greater tendency to use both direct strategies and CID strategies. Compared with American students, Chinese students used more conventional indirect strategies and fewer direct strategies. Therefore, it is safe to say that Chinese students are more indirect than American students in Remedy utterances while complaining.

Next, let's take a closer look at the two types of strategies individually. As to the use of direct strategies, the sample size was too small for the interaction test. However, a significant difference was found between the subjects ($\chi^2 = 16.65546$,

df=2, $p < 0.005$) and across the combined situations according to the four major types of hearers ($\chi^2 = 92.32773$, df=3, $p=0$).

Table 4.13 illustrates that both Americans and Chinese used direct strategies most in the “classmate” situations although Americans used direct strategies more than Chinese did in “classmate” situations. It seems that both American and Chinese subjects tended to use direct strategies to the Hearer, their classmates, with whom they have kept a very intimate relationship.

The Chi-squared test did not find significant difference in the subject-situation interactive effect in terms of the use of Conventional Indirect Strategies. But significant differences were found in the use of them between the subjects ($\chi^2 = 13.43836$, df=2, $p < 0.005$) and across the situations ($\chi^2 = 17.25114$, df=3, $p < 0.005$). Table 4.14 shows that Americans used CID strategies much less than Chinese did in “professor” situations. The reason can be that Americans keep a more equal relationship than Chinese do between professors and students. Therefore, the American students seldom hesitated to be direct to professors. However, Chinese students still keep Confucianism in mind—always respect and not challenge the teachers.

Table 4. 13 Distribution of Direct Strategies

	Professor	Classmate	Service Person	Neighbor	N
L	2(5%)	15(60%)	2(8%)	6(24%)	25(100%)
S	2(6%)	25(74%)	3(9%)	4(12%)	34(100%)
A	9(15%)	35(58%)	13(22%)	3(5%)	60(100%)

(*Note: L= longer-term residents, S= shorter-term residents, A= American subjects)

Table 4. 14 Distribution of Conventional Indirect (CID) Strategies

	Professor	Classmate	Service Person	Neighbor	N
L	42(24%)	25(14%)	45(25%)	41(23%)	178(100%)
S	47(29%)	22(14%)	42(26%)	50(31%)	161(100%)
A	22(20%)	26(23%)	21(19%)	44(39%)	112(100%)

(*Note: L= longer-term residents, S= shorter-term residents, A= American subjects)

Chinese used many more CID strategies than Americans did in “service person” situations. Even the reason can be the same as that of complaining patterns in “service person” situations--Chinese could be intimidated or shy in a foreign country and were very careful in handling a complaining and asking for a rectifying solution.

In summary, in spite of the differences stated above in the use of direct and CID strategies, similarities were found. That is, in “classmate” and “neighbor” situations, both Chinese and Americans have shown a very close tendency in the use of direct and CID strategies--- they used more CID strategies in “neighbor” situations but more direct strategies in “classmate” situations, which indicated that both Americans and Chinese showed more concern when they carried out the complaint to the neighbors than to the classmates. The possible reason might be that both Americans and Chinese considered classmates more intimate than neighbors; therefore, they tended to tell their true feelings and opinions more directly to their classmates.

Request Perspectives in Remedy

Totally, there are 545 utterances of Remedy produced in the study, 178 by LTRs, 195 by STRs, and 172 by American subjects. The Remedy utterances in the study are actually requests. But the Remedy utterances in complaints were generally more forceful than the realization of the speech act of request. When the speaker makes a request, s/he may be asking for a favor from the hearer. However, in a complaint, the speaker has perceived the offence or feels offended. Therefore, when the speaker makes the Remedy utterances, the speaker is expecting an obligation from the hearer to take the responsibility to rectify or remediate the offensive action.

I noticed that there were four types of request perspectives in Remedy: (A) Hearer Dominance--e.g. “Could you please change the food for me?” (by No. 2 LTR); (B) Speaker Dominance--e.g. “Could I get my \$2 back?” (by No. 19 American); (C) Speaker and Hearer Dominance--e.g. “Could we maybe divide some of the work up a little differently?” (by L1. American); (D) Others--in this section, I included any request made from neither Speaker and/or Hearer dominance such as

imperative, and impersonal perspective. Examples are: (1) "Some guys from management asked us to close the garbage can door each time after we use it. " (by No. 30 LTR); (2) "Please close tightly the door." (by No. 7 STR); (3) "How about discussing the details of sharing this work now? (by No. 8 STR).

There is a trend that Chinese tended to use more Hearer Dominance while Americans used more Speaker Dominance. To support my observance, I counted the three groups' Remedy utterances made from Hearer perspective in the linguistic forms of "Could/can you" "Would you", "would you mind" and the ones made from a Speaker Perspective in the linguistic forms of "Could/Can/May I" "I would like/ (am going to) need" "I would ask" "I want" "I think" "I hope". "I wonder/was/am wondering" "I would appreciate it if". All these linguistic forms are the most frequently used. They consist of at least 70% of the linguistic forms in Remedy utterances. Utterances made from Hearer or Speaker perspectives in other linguistic forms were not included. Table 4.15 shows the counts and the percentage of occurrences of the Remedy utterances expressed in the above mentioned two perspectives and linguistic forms.

Table 4.15 Hearer/Speaker request perspectives in specific linguistic forms

	Hearer Perspective	Speaker Perspective	N=
L	113 (63%)	35 (20%)	178 (100%)
S	129 (67%)	40 (21%)	192(100%)
A	59 (34%)	66 (38%)	172(100%)

(*Note: L= Longer-term residents, S= Shorter-term residents, A= American subjects)

Table 4.15 illustrates that two groups of Chinese produced much more Remedy utterances made from the Hearer Perspective than Americans did, while Americans made more requests from Speaker perspectives than Chinese did. A very possible reason could be that American culture tends to value individualism over collectivism. Americans may have got the habit of using "I" to state from a self perspective. However, in Chinese culture, individualism is played down. Chinese

usually tend to show consideration for other people's concern; therefore, Chinese may generally prefer a Hearer dominance.

However, the reason could also be related to L2 learners' acquisition of certain linguistic or pragmatic forms. My findings echoed those of other studies. Kioke (1989) reported that when Blum-Kulka and Levenson examined the written requests produced by English and Hebrew native speakers and learners, they found, in linguistic comparison, that one way native speakers and L2 learners of these two languages differ is in speaker versus hearer-oriented requests, such as "Could I borrow" versus "Could you lend". Therefore, further studies on speakers and learners of other languages should substantiate our findings and determine L2 learners' possible tendency for earlier acquisition of certain linguistic forms or pragmatic dimensions, and the influence of their native language and culture.

Influences of the Social Variables and Situational Variations on the Production of Complaining

All three groups of subjects reacted to the parameters of social distance, social power and severity of wrong in the situations.

As to the use of 6 semantic components in the complaints, social distance, social power and the severity of wrong in the situations have influenced the subjects' use of Opener, Orientation and Justification in their complaints.

All the three groups of subjects used relatively more Openers in the situations when the Hearer was a professor and a service person than the situations when the Hearer was a classmate and a neighbor. The reasons might be that the Speakers tended to use an Opener to show respect to the Professor, that is, the Hearer has a greater social power than the Speaker does. In the "Service person" situations, the Speaker usually doesn't personally know the service person. Therefore, when the Hearer was a service person, the Speaker might see the necessity to use an Opener to get the Hearer's attention and bridge the large social distance somewhat for the purpose of getting the problem solved.

The biggest differences occurred in the use of Justification by the three groups of subjects. In general, all the subjects tended not to use Justification in the "service

person” situations. The reason might be that the social distance between the Hearer (service person) and the Speaker is large; that is, they don’t personally know each other. The Speaker might not feel the necessity to use Justification (supportive moves) to attend to the Hearer’s face concern. On the other hand, all three groups of subjects used Justification mostly in Situation 3 and 4 when the Hearers are classmates. The Speakers usually tended to keep a positively intimate relationship with classmates.

The Severity of the wrong was an important situational variation in the study. It was found to have influenced the subjects’ complaints. A good example of the influence of the severity of the wrong on complaining was found in the two “professor” situations. The wrong the professor did in situation 1 was giving an unfairly grade to the Hearer, which seemed to be more severe than the one in situation 7---the professor assigned an unexpected assignment to the students. That is, the professor’s wrong—having not graded the Speaker’s test paper fairly, in situation 1, might influence the Speaker as an individual more than the wrong in situation 7. In situation 7, some subjects stated that if the unexpected assignment was given to the whole class, then it was fair. They might wait for their classmates to complain or just do the assignment. Thus, due to the perception of fairness in the wrong, and the wrong’s direct influence on the Speaker as an individual, the Speaker might see a greater necessity to complain in situation 1 than in situation 7. Some of the influences that the severity of wrong had on the complaints in these two situations were (1) more complaints made in situation 1 than in situation 7; (2) more Justification utterances used in situation 7 than in situation 1; (3) more softeners used in situation 1 than in situation 7.

In a word, the social variables and situational variations did play a role in influencing the production of the complaints in the study.

Chinese ESL Learners’ Perception and Acquisition of Complaining

The answers Chinese students gave in the self-report questionnaire provided a lot of information about Chinese students’ awareness and acquisition of pragmatics as far as the specific speech act of complaining is concerned.

Question 1 inquires about the subjects' awareness of the importance of complaining in English. I asked them what they had thought about how to complain in English before they came to the U.S.A, Interestingly, 75% of LTRs reported that they had little/never thought of this question", while 50% of STRs claimed that it was important to learn how to complain in English. Since learning to complain in English was received more attention from STRs than LTRs, it is not surprising that STRs produced so many native-like complaints in this study even though their stay in the U.S was merely half a year.

The second question touches the Chinese ESL students' acquisition of complaining in English. A considerable percentage (a little more than 30%) of both groups of Chinese ESL learners chose to learn from native speakers either in real life or in movies or TV programs. But about 30% of subjects in both groups included the answer C--"translate from what I want to say in Chinese into English". This might explain the high percentage of the use of "I think" in Chinese students' responses. There is a Chinese equivalent expression. The Chinese students might have translated "I think" directly into English.

As to the third question concerning the difference between Chinese and Americans in the frequency of the performance of complaining, 66% of LTRs and 50% of STRs chose A: "People in the U.S. complain more than people in Chinese do." This might give a clue to the fact that Chinese students complained a lot in the two situations when the professors did something wrong, which somewhat reflects the influence of an equivalent Chinese saying to the English one "When you are in Rome, do as the Romans do."

66% of LTRs and 63% of STRs held the view that American people complain more directly than Chinese do.

Most of the Chinese ESL learners (75% LTRs and 80% STRs) stated that they would observe what native speakers of English say in real life situations, including on TV and movies, to improve their performance in complaining in English.

As to the 9th question, in both of the group, at least half of the students (50%/LTRs and 53%/STRs) thought the biggest obstacle in their production of

complaining in English was that their English was not good. 10% of STRs thought they didn't have enough cultural knowledge to complain properly.

11 LTRs and only 3 STRs reported that they had complained more in the U.S. A than in China. 4 LTRs chose the reason "I want to enjoy the freedom of speech in the U.S" and 3 chose "I want to practice my English." 3 STRs chose "I have no/little idea of it."

10 STRs and 4 LTRs reported to have complained more in China than in the U.S.A. For 10 STRs who claimed to have complained less in the U.S.A than in China, 3 STRs chose answer C "I don't know how to complain properly in English". 2 chose answer A "My English is not good enough to complain." 3 put very similar specified reasons---"So far, I haven't found anything to complain." For the rest, 1 chose B ("I dare not to complain since I a foreigner in this country") and 1 chose D ("I have no/little idea of this.")

In summary, the speech act of complaining did attract some attention from the Chinese students. They have somewhat noticed the differences in the frequency and the level of directness of complaining between Chinese and Americans. Although we don't know if these are accurate ideas, they were what the Chinese subjects thought in this study. These ideas might have influenced their acquisition and production of complaints. The Chinese subjects have positive attitude toward improving their competence in complaining from native speakers either from TV and movies or from real life settings.

Chinese ESL Learners' Grammatical and Pragmatic Development and Problems

The results in this part are presented to answer one of the major research questions in the study--What are the Chinese ESL learners' development trends and problems in their complaints, if any? I got answers to this question by studying the differences and similarities between three groups' complaints.

In this study, both groups of Chinese subjects held an average TOEFL score of about 600, and therefore are considered advanced ESL learners. Both LTRs and STRs produced some native-like complaints in the complaints, which could be

supported by the similarities between Chinese and American subjects' complaints. Following are a list of major similarities found in this study:

(1) In the use of semantic components, both American and Chinese showed very similar tendencies in the use of Opener and Justification across the situations, which demonstrated that Chinese ESL learners perceived similar degrees of the influences of social distance, social power and severity of wrong as the Americans did, and produced very native-like complaints.

(2) In the patterns of complaints, both Chinese and Americans used the pattern A (Act Statement + Remedy) most in "service person" situations and least in "classmate" situations, pattern C (Remedy only) least in "service person" situations.

(3) In the use of softeners, both Chinese and Americans tended to use more softeners in the "professor" and "service person" situations, while using fewer softeners in the "classmate" and "neighbor" situations.

(4) Even though different frequencies of direct strategies and Conventional Indirect (CID) strategies were found between Chinese and American students, very similar tendency was still identified in the use of these strategies by the subjects across the situations---they all used more CID strategies in "neighbor" situations but more direct strategies in "classmate" situations.

(5) Overall, although the native speakers did produce a wider diversity of linguistic forms in the complaints, the Chinese ESL students used very native-like linguistic forms in the complaints, such as the softeners and the requestive linguistic forms in the Remedy utterances (for example, "Could you/ Could I", "Would you", "I would appreciate it if").

In conclusion, it seems that Chinese ESL learners, either longer-term residents or short-term residents, have shown very native-like perception of the rules of appropriateness and politeness, and very native-like acquisition of English in carrying out the speech act of complaining.

However, differences were also found in the study. Generally speaking, more differences were found between American and Chinese students than differences between Chinese LTRs and STRs. Chinese culture and linguistic influences played

an important role in the production of complaints by both groups of Chinese subjects. In other words, there are more similarities between the two groups of Chinese subjects than differences. When compared with STRs' complaints, Chinese LTRs' problems caught more of my attention than the development they demonstrated in their acquisition of the production of complaints.

The most important problem is the big difference found between Americans and Chinese in the use of Opener (small talk included), Justification, Orientation and Closing. The higher frequency of the use of these utterances by Chinese resulted from the Chinese linguistic and cultural influences. All of these utterances are useful instruments in achieving face-concern, indirectness and politeness, which were very important in performing a very face-threatening speech act. Also they are understandable to Americans. Therefore, Chinese students might not tend to "develop" their competence by deleting these Chinese cultural influences in their complaints. Thus, it could be problematic or improper to consider all the differences caused by Chinese cultural influences as Chinese ESL learners' problems. This invariably leads to a limitation of this study---the use of the native speakers' speech act realization as a norm in a cross-cultural comparative study. I will cover this limitation in my next chapter.

All in all, what we should be aware of is that some of the differences between Chinese and Americans can not be simply labeled more native-like or better than the other, and vice versa.

Next, I want to emphasize that fewer differences are found in pragmatic competence than in linguistic proficiency between the two groups of Chinese subjects. A tentative conclusion could be that both groups of Chinese produce somewhat native-like competence with the exclusion of Chinese cultural influences.

Chinese ESL learners' development

Linguistic development

Since linguistic development is inseparable from and even fundamental to, the pragmatic competence development, it is worthwhile to give some attention to the Chinese Long-term Residents' linguistic development first. Further, Chinese LTRs'

linguistic development was more obvious, and easier to be identified, than pragmatic competence in the study. Here the Chinese LTRs' linguistic development is presented through the comparison between their complaints and STRs'.

After an average length of 3.2 years staying in the U.S., the LTRs demonstrated a higher target language proficiency than STRs, who had been in the U.S for merely six months. The following evidence could support LTRs' progress in mastering English. First, LTRs achieved a higher average score on the cloze test than STRs did. LTRs got 22.3 out of 25, while STRs got 20.6 out of 25. None of the LTRs got a score less than 20. Second, LTRs demonstrated a more concise production of complaints than STRs. The problem of wordiness and redundancy was found more serious in STRs' complaints than in LTRs' complaints. Following are two examples from STRs' complaints.

Example 4.18

"Excuse me, Dr. Smith, I am concerning with my grade in the mid-term exam. For that question, I think I have answered a large part of it and maybe I should get some points from my answers. It's important for me, not only because of the record, but also because I think I am deserved to be given a higher score. I hope you will consider my situation. Thank you." (No. 19 STR's response in situation1)

Example 4.19

"Excuse me, sir, I am sorry to interrupt you. Can you do me a favor? Tomorrow morning, I have an exam. It is very important for me. I need to fall asleep early. But your music sound made me not easy to fall sleep. I am sorry again. But I really need your help." (No. 5 STR's complaint in Situation 5)

In these two examples, the subjects used some unnecessary words and repeated the same meaning.

Third, fewer grammatical errors were found in LTRs' complaints than STRs'. Examples of errors could be found in the above example 5.1, "I'm concerning with my grade in the mid-term exam..." "...I think I am deserved to be given a higher score."

Further, STRs showed more awkwardness in using English. Some of the usage was rather inappropriate, for example, "Hi, Miss Judy".

However, none of the grammatical errors or improper use of the language interfered with my understanding of the complaints; therefore, they did not affect the data analysis.

In one word, Chinese LTR did better than STRs in terms of grammar and concise production of complaints.

Pragmatic Development

Chinese LTRs' pragmatic development is not as noticeable as linguistic development after the comparison of the three groups' complaints. The major reason could be that both two groups of Chinese students are very advanced learners. Chinese LTRs' pragmatic development can be shown from the following aspects:

- (1) LTRs used a greater variety of linguistic forms than STRs did in the requestive utterances in Remedy.
- (2) In the use of three patterns of complaints—(Act Statement + Remedy, Act Statement only and Remedy only), in most of the cases, LTRs produced a closer tendency to Americans' than the Chinese STRs did.

Chinese ESL learners' Problems

Both groups of Chinese subjects revealed some problems in language acquisition and pragmatic competence development. LTRs' problems may be categorized as fossilization. That is, after an average of more three years' stay in an English-speaking country, they still produced problems similar to the new comers—Chinese STRs in this study.

The two groups of Chinese ESL learners produced a relative higher frequency of the uses of the following semantic components: Remedy, Opener, Justification, Closing and Orientation than the Americans did, which may contribute to the result that Chinese subjects produced slightly longer complaints than American subjects did. Wordiness or redundancy in the realization of the speech acts has been one of major problems of second language learners. Second language learners may use more than enough words to render their indirectness or politeness, which may be perceived as improper by native speakers. In my study, the following examples from both LTRs' and STRs' complaints could be considered

redundant and inefficient: "I am sincerely sorry to trouble you," "Excuse me, hi, I'm sorry but". In this study, STRs were the wordiest complainers.

The very noticeable problem is that unlike native speakers, Chinese made little use of past tense in the complaints to achieve a level of indirectness or politeness.

In English, verbs used in past tense are considered to be more polite or less direct than in present tense in the realization of face-threatening speech acts. In the study, it seems to me that Chinese ESL students haven't quite understood the point of it. In the utterances of Remedy, there are some good examples. Some native speakers used "Would it be possible...?" "I was hoping...", while only one STR used "would it be possible...?" Instead, they used "Is it possible...?" "I hope..." Another example is the frequently used word "wonder" in the Act Statement and Remedy, which was used differently in terms of the tense by native speakers and Chinese ESL students. Eleven Americans used "I was wondering" and one used "I wonder"; while in contrast, ten Chinese LTRs used "I wonder " or "I am wondering", only one used "I was wondering"; none of Chinese STRs used "I was wondering" while 8 used either "I am wondering" or "I wonder."

Another big problem is some of the Chinese students' utterances might be too indirect to native speakers to achieve the intended goal. A communication breakdown can occur. An example is as follows:

Example 4.20

"Professor, I know I missed one point here for this problem, but I did write out the answers for most points. I study hard for this course and I think all my effort should not be zero because I missed one point, though. It's obvious that I've known most of it." (No.7 LTR's response in Situation 1)

I did consider this response as a complaint since I could mark an Act Statement in it, because the Speaker did say something like "all my effort should not be zero..." to express her or his disapproval. However, this long response may lead the professor in confusion, a possible reaction in the professor's mind could be "What's the problem?" "Then what do you want?". In this case, probably a direct Act

Statement or Remedy utterance is more preferable to Americans who seem to value directness over indirectness.

These linguistic or pragmatic problems produced by Chinese ESL learners may shed light on the ESL instruction. The implication will be provided in the next chapter.

Summary

In this chapter, the results of the study and discussions were provided. There were five major parts in this chapter. Part one reported the different use of the six semantic components by Chinese and American subjects, and their opting out choices. Part two mainly answered the research question concerning the level of directness. Chinese were found to be more indirect than Americans. Part three discussed the influences of social variables and situational variations on the complaints. Part four provided information on Chinese ESL learners' perception and acquisition of complaining by studying their answers on the questionnaire. Part five identified Chinese ESL learners' pragmatic and grammatical development and problems.

CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSION

This chapter is going to present the major findings in the American and Chinese students' production of complaining, limitations of the study, and implications for further research and applications of the findings for English and Chinese language learners and educators. I would like to first return to the research questions posed for the study and identify the answers from the findings.

Major Findings

The research questions posed for this study were four. Following are the answers to them one by one.

Answers to question 1--"How do Chinese and Americans' complaints differ with respect to the semantic components that are included?"

In this study, a complete complaint was broken into six semantic components--Opener, Orientation, Justification, Remedy, Act Statement and Closing. Remedy and Act Statement were considered as core components, which expressed the complaining defined for this study. Opener, Orientation, Justification and Closing were so-called external linguistic build-ups occurring either before or after the core components. Further, Orientation and Justification served as supportive moves, either mitigating or aggravating the force of the speech act of complaining. Small talk was found in the Opener.

Five semantic components were found to have been used more by Chinese subjects than Americans--Opener, Orientation, Justification did, and Remedy and Closing than Americans did. Small talk was used only by Chinese. Americans used Act Statement more than Chinese did.

Three patterns of complaints have been found revolving around the use of two core components: (A) Act Statement + Remedy, (B) Act Statement only, (C) Remedy only. Significant differences were found in the use of these three patterns of complaints by the three groups of subjects across the situations. Pattern A was found to have been used in a relatively balanced way by the three groups of subjects. More differences were found in the use of Pattern B and C. Americans used pattern B (Act Statement only) significantly more than Chinese did in the

“professor” situations. Also, in “service person” situations, Americans used more pattern B than Chinese did. LTRs used pattern B most in “classmate” situations, while STRs used pattern B most in “neighbor” situations. As to the use of Pattern C (Remedy only), a big difference was found that in the “service person” situations: only Chinese students used pattern C while Americans did not use pattern C at all.

Answers to question 2--“What are the differences in the levels of directness between American and Chinese ESL learners’ complaints?”

After analyzing the complaints from different perspectives, a conclusion can be safely drawn that Chinese students complained more indirectly than Americans students in the school settings in this study. Evidence came from the following respects.

First, compared with the American students, both groups of Chinese ESL learners displayed a more highly frequent use of external linguistic build-ups, that is, Opener (small talk included), Justification, Orientation and Closing utterances, to achieve the level of indirectness and politeness in the study, which largely resulted from the Chinese cultural influences on the Chinese ESL learners. In general, Chinese tend to use external linguistic build-ups to attend to the Hearer’s face and keep or protect the harmony between the Speaker and the Hearer. Small talk and supportive moves (Justification and Orientation in this study) are typical Chinese linguistic instruments to adjust the distance and relationship between the Speaker and Hearer, and attend to both the Speaker’s and Hearer’s face concerns for the harmonious result in the realization of speech acts, especially face-threatening speech acts.

However, it seems that the higher frequency of the use of supportive moves by Chinese ESL learners in this study is not necessarily traced back to their Chinese background. Studies on non-native speakers from other language and cultural backgrounds were also found to have used more supportive moves and more wordy than English native speakers. At least, my study corroborated Blum-Kulka and Olshtain’s (1996) non-native speakers’ “too many words” finding and Kasper’s finding that non-native speakers displayed more supportive moves than the target

native speakers. The conclusion I can draw here is that the findings I got from this study were consistent with some other studies as the ones mentioned above. Therefore, these findings matched the results from previous studies that Chinese tended to use more external linguistic structures, especially small talk and supportive moves, to achieve the level of indirectness and politeness in complaining.

Brown and Levinson (1987) categorized small talk and supportive moves into positive politeness strategies. The finding of this study showed Chinese do use a lot of positive politeness strategies in performing the face-threatening speech act---complaining. Ji (2000) argued that certain polite verbal behaviors in Chinese culture tend to maintain positive face, which may make Chinese culture more positive-politeness oriented. The above results gained from the study support Ji's above argument.

Furthermore, what deserves mention is that Chinese used a specific softener "I think" much more than Americans did. Chinese ESL learners' more frequent use of "I think" can be traced back to their L1. In Chinese, there is an equivalent expression of "I think". It was quite possible that Chinese did a positive pragmatic transfer here.

Third, in general, Chinese students used more conventional indirect strategies in Remedy utterances while Americans used more direct strategies. Specifically, Americans used direct strategies much more than Chinese did in the "professor" situations. Chinese used much more Conventional Indirect (CID) strategies than Americans did in the "service person" situations.

Answers to Question 3--"Do the social factors and situational variations influence the American and Chinese students' performance of the speech act of complaining? If yes, in what ways?"

The results have shown that social factors and situational variables had a great influence on both American and Chinese students' performance of complaining.

Social distance influences the use of some semantic components. A case in point is the use of Justification by three groups of subjects. When there is no or little social distance, in other words, when the Hearer and Speaker personally know each

other, both Americans and Chinese tended to use more Justification to take care of the Hearer's face and achieve the appropriate level of indirectness and politeness. Little justification was used in "service person" situations when there was large social distance between the Hearer and the Speaker.

Second, the severity of the wrong is a crucial factor when the subjects chose their strategies. An example was the severity of wrong in two "professor" situations. More complaints were produced in situation 1 than in situation 7. More justification was used in situation 7 than in situation 1, and more softeners were used in Situation 1 than in Situation 7. In situation 1, the speaker got an unfairly low grade from the professor and might have got offended; therefore, the speaker tended to complain. In situation 7, the professor assigned an unexpected assignment to the whole class. Some subjects considered it as fair if everyone had to do the assignment; thus, they did not tend to complain. So it seems that individually speaking, the wrong in situation 1 was more severe than that in situation 7, or the wrong in situation 1 was more possible to elicit a complaint from the speaker as an individual. When the subjects did complain in these two situations, they used more justifications in situation 7 than in situation 1. In situation 7, the Speaker knew that the professor had the right to give students assignment. In order to get a solution to the problem, the Speaker had to use more justifications to show the respect to the professor and beg for the professor's sympathy for the overwhelming situation in the final week. However, in situation 1, the Speaker saw the professor's wrong and might feel s/he deserved a Remedy to correct the wrong. The speaker might not see the need of justifications. But when a Speaker did complain in situation 1, s/he used more softeners to mitigate the force of the act, which indicated that the Speaker was careful when confronting a professor---a Hearer who held higher social status.

In one word, the social factors and situational variations did influence the subjects' production of complaints.

Answers to question 4--"Do Chinese language and culture influence Chinese ESL learners' performance of complaining? If yes, in what ways?"

The results of the study displayed the Chinese cultural influences on Chinese ESL learners' performance of the speech act of complaining.

The first example is that Chinese ESL learners used small talk in their complaints while Americans did not use it, which could be traced back to the Chinese language and cultural influence. Previous studies showed that Chinese tended to use external linguistic build-ups to achieve indirectness and politeness (Zhang, 1995).

A second example is the influence of Confucianism on Chinese students' complaints. In the "professor" situations, Chinese students used fewer Act Statements than American students did. Under the influence of Confucianism, Chinese students might not tend to challenge the professor's authority.

A third example is the unusually higher frequency of the use of "I think" by Chinese subjects than Americans. In Chinese, there is an equivalent expression of "I think" which is used a lot in colloquial Chinese. The Chinese ESL students might have made a direct translation. For example, when I am invited to a party, I don't want to go. I may say in Chinese "wo xiang hai shi bu qu de hao". By word to word translation, it means, "I think I'd better not go."

Some examples are from the reasons Chinese students gave for their opting out choices. In the situation when the professor assigned an unexpected assignment, Chinese students opted out because "students should get ready for any assignment" "do more and learn more", which reflected the Chinese culture's emphasis on the students' responsibility of learning.

In summary, Chinese influences were traceable in Chinese ESL learners' complaints.

Answers to question 5--"What are the Chinese ESL learners' development trends and problems in their complaints, if any?"

After a comparison between the complaints made by Chinese longer-term residents (LTRs) and Chinese shorter-term residents (STRs), Chinese ESL learners' grammatical and pragmatic development has been demonstrated mainly in the following areas:

- (1) Chinese longer-term residents made fewer grammatical errors than shorter-term residents did in the complaints.
- (2) Chinese longer-term residents used a greater variety of linguistic forms than shorter-term residents did in Remedy utterances.
- (3) In the use of three patterns of complaints (Act Statement + Remedy, Act Statement Only and Remedy Only), in most cases, Chinese LTRs produced a closer tendency to Americans than the Chinese STRs did.
- (4) Chinese LTRs were less redundant than Chinese STRs.

It seems that the length of staying in an ESL situation did influence the ESL learners' performance of complaining, but more linguistically than pragmatically.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study mainly come from the disadvantages of the major data-collection method employed in this interlanguage pragmatics study, the Discourse Completion Task (DCT) form. The Discourse Completion Task (DCT) form has some obvious disadvantages. For example, it cannot adequately present the actual wording in natural speech, or the turns taken in the conversation. Therefore, in this study, the DCT form might not have recorded accurately subjects' actual performance in complaining. The DCT form could not record more conversation turns in which some further directness and politeness strategies might have been used. A good example could be the response made by an American subject in situation 7, "Professor Luke. How much will this paper factor into our final grade?". This response was not considered as a complaint since no Act Statement nor Remedy was found in it. However, it could develop into a potential complaint in a real-life conversation, as more turns would take place.

Furthermore, on the DCT form, the students might tend to report by writing what they should say in the situations instead of what they would exactly say in the real life situations. Thus, the data collected might not truly or fully reflect the subjects' linguistic and pragmatic competence in complaining in school settings. In further studies, natural data are highly recommended.

Another limitation of the study could be that native-speakers' realization of complaining was used as a norm to evaluate non-native speakers' performance and development in complaining. It is not fair to say that Chinese do not produce non-native like complaints because Chinese used small talk but Americans used none, and Chinese used more supportive moves than Americans did. Both small talk and supportive moves are effective alternative ways to achieve appropriate directness and politeness in performing a face-threatening speech act as complaining. Furthermore, Chinese and Americans have different identities in America; Chinese may be expected to be more indirect and polite than Americans are. It is very reasonable for Chinese to use small talk and supportive moves to achieve indirectness and politeness. In the study, LTRs in many ways complained even in a more Chinese way than STRs did, a very possible reason could be that after their years of stay in the U.S., they might have felt it is better to complain in a Chinese way or complaining in a Chinese way is more acceptable to American hearers. This reason may explain why Chinese LTRs used more small talk and supportive moves, more direct strategies than STRs did.

Therefore, using native speakers' complaints as a norm to judge non-native speakers' realization of complaining can not always be very appropriate.

The last limitation is that the researcher of the study was the only one who marked the semantic components of the complaints. Having multiple raters and determining inter-rater reliability for the classification system would be useful in the future.

Implications for ESL/EFL Instruction and Further Research

The findings presented in this study are very useful and insightful for EFL/ESL teaching, the course and text development, especially for Chinese learners of English.

Implication for L2 education

As stated previously, a lot of similarities were found in the complaints made by Americans and Chinese ESL students, especially the similarities between Chinese longer-term residents (LTRs) and Chinese shorter-term residents (STRs). These

similarities are very encouraging to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The STRs' complaints have shown that those who had even lived in a target setting for barely half a year still showed very native-like perception of the rules of appropriateness and politeness, and could produce somewhat native-like complaints. This result implied that even in EFL situations, advanced Chinese learners of English have acquired very native-like pragmatic competence in complaining.

The differences I identified between the three groups of subjects could shed light on the writing of textbooks and design of class instruction for advanced EFL/ESL learners.

The first difference between Chinese and Americans' complaints is very major--that Chinese used more external linguistic build-ups such as small talk and supportive moves to take care of the face concern, and achieve the level of indirectness and politeness. For advanced language learners, the instruction should be focused on the noticing method and arousing the learners' awareness. Therefore, in class instruction, it is necessary to remind the learners of American English or Chinese of this major difference and let them be aware of it. The learners' awareness of the difference will help them perceive the appropriate rules of politeness and directness and adjust their performance of a face-threatening speech act.

The second difference is very linguistic. In Chinese, there are no similar patterns of tense expression. Tenses in English have always been problems for Chinese ESL/EFL learners. Chinese ESL learners seldom are instructed to the deliberate use of different tenses in the same situations. The Chinese ESL learners might not realize at all that the past tense in English is instrumental in achieving indirectness and politeness. The use of the past tense is actually an internal linguistic build-up to get across the indirect and polite meanings in English. Therefore, EFL/ESL learners should be taught to use past tense appropriately to convey indirectness and politeness in communication, especially, when carrying out a face-threatening speech act like complaining.

The third difference is a combination of linguistic, pragmatic and cultural differences. Compared with Chinese LTRs and Americans, Chinese STRs used fewer linguistic forms in their adoption of direct or indirect strategies. For example, in the use of conventional indirect strategies, more than 80% of them used by STRs were “could you” “would you”, “would you mind”, while native speakers have a lot more expressions to fulfil the same purpose. Native speakers had a more balanced use of expressions from different perspectives, such as: “Could I”, “Is there an alternative” “Would it be possible”. Therefore, more varieties of linguistic forms should be taught to adopt direct or indirect strategies in speech acts. The use of past tense, the use of requestive utterances made from Hearer, Speaker and impersonal perspectives should be included in instruction as well.

The fourth difference is also a combination of linguistic, pragmatic and cultural differences. That is, Chinese ESL learners were a little wordy, and more indirect than Americans were. Directness and concise expressions should be emphasized in ESL/EFL class instruction. Further, target culture and values should be added to instruction. An example is that Americans may cherish directness over indirectness in complaining. Too wordy and indirect responses may cause communication breakdown.

All these differences found in these study between Chinese ESL learners’ complaints and Americans’ have provided insight into ESL/EFL instruction, especially to Chinese students. In ESL/EFL instruction and textbook writing, it is worth arousing the learners’ awareness of all these cultural, linguistic and pragmatic differences, providing detailed explanations in the shades of the words, different tenses of the verbs and directing learners’ notices to all these differences, and therefore encouraging the students to narrow the differences and achieve native-like proficiency both linguistically and pragmatically.

Further, information gained from the Chinese ESL learners’ self-report questionnaire indicated that L2 learners’ conscious awareness of sociopragmatic features could be crucial to L2 pragmatic acquisition. The consciousness-raising

approach can be effective in the teaching of L2 pragmatics, especially, to advanced L2 learners.

Implication for further research

As to the implications for further study, the first one is using naturally occurring data. In this study, all the data were elicited by a Discourse Completion Task form. The subjects wrote their data in some hypothetical situations instead of speaking their data out in real-life situations. Therefore, the data could be not as authentic as naturally occurring data. For further studies, I would suggest a collection of natural occurring data in real life or at least half-natural data through other methods such as role-play.

Second, more subject groups of non-native speakers and social settings should be included when investigating the non-native speakers' pragmatic competence. In this study, I only looked at the graduate student subjects' performance in student-life related settings. L2 learners are not limited to school settings or certain age groups. The development of pragmatic competence of non-native speakers demands studies on subjects in different disciplines and at different age groups.

Third, a future study addressing the differences between Chinese and Americans' complaints should get Chinese students' data both in English and Chinese. Chinese participants' complaints in Chinese may help us gain more direct insight into Chinese ESL/EFL learners' perception of rule of appropriateness and politeness in certain social situations, their consequent performances in these situations, and their possible influences on Chinese ESL/EFL learners' acquisition of pragmatic competence in English.

Fourth, in further research, an effort is deserved to investigate the correlation between ESL/EFL learners' English proficiency level and their performance of speech acts in English.

Fifth, for future studies investigating the speech act of complaining, it would be useful to make the participants rate the severity of wrong in the situations. In addition, for those who are interested in examining the semantic components, more

raters are recommended to categorize and mark the semantic components in the complaints.

Sixth, gender difference should be noted in future studies. Historically, the different social status has influenced women and men's life greatly. Linguistic performance is not an exception. Many people's observations and anecdotal reports have indicated some gender differences in social behavior, face concern and performances of the face-threatening speech acts. Therefore, a comparison between male and female participants' performance in a face-threatening speech act could be very interesting and enlightening. However, due to the small size of subjects, female/male comparison was not able to do on the complaints in this study. Future study should not overlook the female/male difference.

Seventh, future studies may examine the universals in complaining across many cultures. The research literature on the speech act of complaining so far has only provided studies of Hebrew, German, American English and Chinese speakers. Studies of participants from more cultures and language backgrounds may provide more insights into the universal perception of face and face-threatening speech acts.

Conclusion

This study examined Chinese longer-term residents (LTRs), Chinese shorter-term residents (STRs), and American students' complaining in 8 hypothetical situations, which a graduate student usually may encounter in their daily life in the U.S.

Findings have shown that Chinese and American students complained differently. In general, Chinese students complained more indirectly than American students did. Influenced by Chinese language and culture, Chinese students used small talk and more supportive moves to achieve indirectness and politeness. Chinese students used more Conventional Indirect (CID) strategies than Americans did in the complaints.

Americans opted out more than Chinese students did. The social factors (social distance and social power) and situational variations (the severity of the wrong) influenced both Chinese and American students' complaints.

Of course the findings of the study should be considered in the light of the study's limitations, the size of the subjects and the hypothetical situations. However, the findings do give us important insights on English/Chinese as a second/foreign language instruction and textbook writing. Further, the findings call us attention to advanced ESL/EFL learners' pragmatic competence.

The information gained in the study will benefit both teachers and learners of English as a second/foreign language.

APPENDIX A CONSENT FORM FOR CHINESE SUBJECTS

Consent Form

Part one: Brief Introduction to the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate how Chinese use English in some situations. I am using Discourse Completion Task (DCT) to collect data. The DCT will need 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Furthermore, to all the Chinese subjects, I will hand out a questionnaire, which may need another 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

Part Two: Protection of Anonymity

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate in this study, your anonymity will be protected. Neither your name nor any other identifying information about you will be revealed in reporting the results of the study.

Part Three: Consent Form

I consent to participate in this study, I understand that my anonymity will be protected. I give permission for the information I provide in the Discourse Completion Task and the questionnaire (the latter is only for Chinese ESL students) to be used in the researcher's articles (including thesis) and presentation reporting this study.

Sign Name

Print Name

Date

Investigator: De Zhang, a graduate student in English Department at Iowa State University

Phone number: 515-572-4689

Email address: djzhang@iastate.edu

APPENDIX B CONSENT FORM FOR AMERICAN SUBJECTS

Consent Form

Part one: Brief Introduction to the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate how native speakers use English in some situations. I am using Discourse Completion Task (DCT) to collect data. The DCT will need 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

Part Two: Protection of Anonymity

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate in this study, your anonymity will be protected. Neither your name nor any other identifying information about you will be revealed in reporting the results of the study.

Part Three: Consent Form

I consent to participate in this study, I understand that my anonymity will be protected. I give permission for the information I provide in the Discourse Completion Task and the questionnaire (the latter is only for Chinese ESL students) to be used in the researcher's articles (including thesis) and presentation reporting this study.

Sign Name

Print Name

Date

Investigator: De Zhang, a graduate student in English Department at Iowa State University

Phone number: 515-572-4689

Email address: djzhang@iastate.edu

APPENDIX C DISCOURSE COMPLETION TASK FORM

Personal Information (Americans):

1. Gender : Male/ Female
2. Age: 20-25, 26-30, 31-35, 36-40 41 and over
3. Currently a student : Yes/No
 If yes, undergraduate or Master's or Ph.D. degree student.
 If not, the year of graduation _____.
 The area of concentration is/was _____.
4. Hometown/State _____

Personal Information (Chinese subjects):

1. Gender: Male/ Female
2. Age: 20-25, 26-30, 31-35, 36-40, 41 and over
3. Your latest TOEFL score is: 500-550, 551-590, 591-620, 621 or above
 Test date is Year _____ Month _____.
4. Currently a student: Yes/No
 If yes, undergraduate, Master's or Ph.D. degree student
 If not, the year of graduation _____.
 The area of concentration is/was _____.
5. Years of residence in the USA _____.
6. Since you came to ISU, you have taken the following English writing and speaking classes (circle those which apply to you):
 English 180, English 101 Listening, and English 101 Reading,
 English 101B, English 101C, English 101D, English 104,
 English 105, English 302, English 314.

If you are not a student at ISU or didn't graduate from ISU, please indicate the English language classes (including reading, speaking, writing and listening classes) you have taken at your university in the USA:

The task:

Imagine you encounter the following situations in the United States. Please tell your response for each situation. Write down the exact words that you would say in the real life situation.

Example

Situation: You have been waiting for over an hour in a long line to purchase tickets for the first showing of a new movie. You are rather worried that the tickets may soon be sold out. As you turn around to estimate the length of the line, a teenager cuts in front of you.

Some possible responses:

“Well, what are you doing cuttin’ in front of the line here? I have been waiting here all this time. You should have to wait as well. Why don’t you just go to the back of the line?”

“I’ve been waiting on this line for a long time, and—I really don’t think it’s fair that you cut in front of me. I want a ticket just as much as you do so please be fair and go away, to the end of the line. Like I had to do when I got here an hour and a half ago.”

“Would you please go to the back of the line? I’ve been standing here for quite awhile myself, and—everyone— has to take their turn. Thank you.”

You are supposed to give only one response to each situation unless you have other concerns. Please do write down the exact words that you would say in the real life situations.

If you have questions, please call me at 572-4689 or email me at djzhang@iastate.edu. If you don’t have any question at this point, please move to the following task.

Situation 1:

Professor Smith teaches you one of the required major courses. You have worked very hard on this course. When he posted the grades for the 4-essay question mid-term exam for your class and listed the points of each question, you were surprised to find that in one question, you only missed one minor point; however, Professor Smith graded that you answered the whole question wrong. This grade will eventually affect your getting a better final grade in this important course.

Your response is:

Situation 2

The cashier charged you \$25.99 for a book in the bookstore on campus. When you walked to the door, you were looking at the receipt and noticed the price was \$23.99. That is, the cashier overcharged you by 2 dollars.

Your response

Situation 3

You are doing a major group project, which counted 30 percent of the final grade with one of your classmates. Both of you will get the same grade on this project. Your partner doesn't contribute much and you have to do most of the work. Besides this project, you have other studies to work on. You are very overwhelmed.

Your response is:

Situation 4:

A few days before finals week, a classmate asked to borrow your notebook containing notes for the entire semester. Your classmate promised to return the notes to you the next day, so you agreed to lend them. However, the third day arrived and your classmate still gave no indication of returning the notes. You were in need of the notes to review for the finals.

Your response is:

Situation 5:

One of your neighbors plays Rock & Roll loudly till mid-night almost every weekend night. However, this Sunday night, you had to sleep early and get ready for tomorrow's exam.

Your response is:

Situation 6:

You went to eat in a restaurant. When the food was served, you found that the meat was not fresh and tasted spoiled.

Your response is:

Situation 7

It was only two weeks before the finals. Professor Mary Luke, who teaches one of your major courses, unexpectedly assigned a 10-page paper, which had not been on the syllabus to the class. You have other final papers, projects and final exams to work on.

Your response is:

Situation 8

One of your neighbors, Judy seldom tightly closes the door of the garbage can after she throws the garbage into it. You are the closest resident to this garbage can. The bad smell of the garbage and the flies bother you a lot. Today, she does that again when you see her near the garbage can.

Your response is:

In the Discourse Completion Task form, there are 8 situations,

Situation 1: Your professor gave you an unfairly low score

Situation 2: You were overcharged

Situation3: Your classmate contributed little contribution to the group project

Situation4: Your classmate didn't return the notes as promised

Situation5: Your neighbor made loud noise

Situation 6: You were served bad food in the restaurant

Situation7: Your professor assigned you an unexpected paper

Situation 8: Your neighbor didn't close the door of the garbage can tightly

In which situation(s) did you choose not to complain (circle the situations) and why?

Situation 1,

Situation 2,

Situation 3,

Situation 4,

Situation 5,

Situation 6,

Situation 7,

Situation 8,

APPENDIX D QUESTIONNAIRE TO CHINESE SUBJECTS

1. Before I came to the U.S. A, as regard to how to complain in English, I thought it was:
 - A. important
 - B. not important
 - C. I would learn them soon when I go to the USA
 - D. I had little/never thought of this question.
 - E. Other (please specify)_____

2. How have you learned to complain in English? I have
 - A. observed how native-speakers complain
 - B. learned from the American movies or TV programs
 - C. translated from what I want to say in Chinese into English
 - D. (Circle one of the combinations) A & B, B & C, A & C or A & B & C
 - E. Other (please specify)_____

3. According to my observation and experiences: in the situations of complaining to a superior (such as a professor), I think,
 - A. People in the USA complain more than people in China do
 - B. People in the USA complain less than people in China do
 - C. People in the USA complain as much as the same as people in China do
 - D. I have little or no idea of it.
 - E. Other (please specify)_____

4. According to my observation and experiences, as to the level of directness when complaining, I think
 - A. People in the USA are more direct than people in China are.
 - B. People in the USA are less direct than people in China are.
 - C. People in the USA and China are the same or similar in the level of directness when they complain
 - D. I have little or no idea of this
 - E. Other (please specify)_____

5. Since I came to the USA, I have complained
 - A. less
 - B. more
 - C. the same as I did in China
 - D. I have little or no idea of this
 - E. Other (please specify)_____

**If you choose A, please answer question 6;
If you choose B, please answer question 7.**

6. I have complained more in the USA, I think the major reason is that:
- A. I want to enjoy the freedom of speech in the USA
 - B. I know American people don't care so much as Chinese people do when I complain
 - C. I want to practice my English at any time in any situation
 - D. I have little or no idea of this.
 - E. Other (please specify)_____
7. I have complained less in the USA, I think the major reason is that:
- A. My English is not good enough to complain
 - B. I dare not complain since I am a foreigner in this country
 - C. I don't know how to complain properly in English
 - D. I have no/little idea of this.
 - E. Other (please specify)_____
8. If I want to improve my performance in complaining in English, I would
- A. find some textbooks to read;
 - B. observe what native-speakers say in real life situations, including on TV and movies
 - C. ask native speakers to teach me
 - D. Just translate what I want to say in Chinese into English
 - E. Other (please specify)_____
9. My biggest obstacle in complaining in English is:
- A. My English is not good;
 - B. I don't have enough cultural knowledge to complain properly
 - C. I don't have enough courage or confidence
 - D. I have no idea of this.
 - E. Other (please specify)_____

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